

ESSAYS

RELATIVE TO

THE HABITS, CHARACTER,

AND

MORAL IMPROVEMENT

OF

THE HINDOOS.



L O N D O N

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ADVERTISEMENT

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INDIAN ESSAYS.

I

ON THE BURNING OF WIDOWS *

It is a melancholy reflection that the religion which influences the population of these vast regions is totally unfavourable to the exercise of any principle either of humanity or virtue. Many of its precepts are so afflictive and unnatural, that they seem to have sunk by common consent into complete disuse. If every point of the Hindoo ritual were literally enforced, not only would it be impossible to carry forward the ordinary business of life, but all those social relations, to which we are indebted for so much of our happiness, would be completely obliterated, and the whole frame of society dissolved. There are still, however, many barbarous usages which have been perpetuated for ages, among which is the burning of widows, a practice, the enormity of which would strike even the Hindoos themselves, did not a blind attachment to the vices of their forefathers overcome every natural feeling. In all the annals of human depravity, it will be difficult to discover a custom so horrible in its nature, or so destructive in its consequences. It forms one of the blackest pages in the history of Hindooism,

* Friend of India, vol I p 301

and were this feature of its character alone to remain on record, it would be of itself sufficient to hand it down to the execration of the latest ages. That a practice which would reflect a stigma on the most barbarous tribes, should have been sanctioned by men of thought and penetration, and perpetuated among a people whose mildness of disposition is proverbial, shews to what a state of degradation the mind may be reduced under the influence of an unnatural superstition. This is not the case of a patriot relinquishing life to establish the freedom of his country, or a martyr braving the flames to maintain the rights of conscience. On these occasions we feel a melancholy pleasure in applauding a voluntary resignation of life. But it is the helpless and disconsolate widow torn from her family at the very climax of her grief, and hurried to the flames amidst the shouts of an unfeeling multitude. She must stifle every feeling of compassion for the offspring of her womb, she must renounce them at a period when they stand most in need of her care, and when weighed down with sorrow, she must take a last look on all mortal things, and enter the flames. Had this sacrifice been demanded of the stronger part of the community, even then it would have been a demand of singular enormity, but to demand it of the weaker sex, to urge the unprotected female, while her grief for the loss which her children have recently sustained is yet insupportable, to deprive them of their only remaining consolation, and cast them as miserable orphans on the wide world, is surely a case of unparalleled barbarity.

If we turn from the wretched victim to the unhappy offspring whom she abandons, we behold only a sight of still deeper woe. Scarcely recovered from the blow inflicted on them by the death of their father, they are

hurned from their once-peaceful home to the funeral pile, to witness the death of their mother ! In other countries the loss of paternal protection is, in some measure, compensated by the increased exertion of maternal kindness and solicitude. But under the influence of this system, the children are deprived of both parents in one day. A state of the deepest misery succeeds to a state of domestic happiness with such rapidity as almost to deprive them of the exercise of their mental faculties. The family compact is destroyed with the suddenness of an earthquake. The corpse of the father is scarcely cold before their only living parent is bound to it, and consumed in their presence. To aggravate the enormity of the scene, the funeral pile must be lighted by the eldest son ! If this office had been consigned to some unconcerned spectator, to the brahmun who officiates on these occasions with such lively pleasure, or even to some distant and unaffected relative, there might have been some relief to the feelings. But it must be performed by the *eldest son*, the extinction of the hopes of his family is consigned to him. He accompanies his mother from his home to the banks of the Ganges, he stands by in all the agony of grief during the performance of those tremendous rites by which she devotes herself to destruction, nor does he dare to lift an arm for her relief. He beholds his mother, endeared to him by the recollection of a thousand acts of kindness, thrown on the funeral pile like a beast of sacrifice, and inhumanly bound to the dead body of his father, with all those indications of brutal satisfaction which shed a tenfold horror on the scene, and surrounded by his weeping brothers and sisters, *he* lights up the pile which consumes the living parent with the dead, and extinguishes all their hopes of future tenderness and protection.

If we would form an adequate idea, however, of the effects of this system on social happiness, we must not overlook the state of prospective misery which each family suffers long before the painful moment of separation arrives. The family in which it is known that the mother will, through the tyranny of custom, devote herself to the flames, is subjected for years to the most painful and afflictive anxiety. The happiness which they enjoy may be suddenly annihilated, a single day may reduce them from a high state of domestic felicity to the situation of the most wretched orphans. They feel that the death of the father will be only a signal for the more horrid death of their endeared mother. The anguish which such a state of suspense and anxiety must involve, may be more easily conceived than described. The longer they are indulged with the endearments of maternal affection, the longer is this state of misery prolonged, and the keener does that stroke become of which they are held in dreadful expectation. The continuance of their social happiness is removed even from the common chance of mortality, and placed at the disposal of a merciless superstition, their cup of bliss is mixed with the bitterest gall, and the gay season of youth is in many instances consumed in almost insupportable anxiety and distress.

Viewing, therefore, this horrid system as destructive both to public happiness, and to domestic enjoyment, we hail with lively satisfaction, a pamphlet recently published by a Hindoo on this subject. A learned native, already well known among our countrymen by his luminous examination of the Hindoo theology and philosophy, has printed and widely circulated a tract in the Bengalee language, the object of which is to dissuade his countrymen from the practice of these horrid rites, and has,

likewise published a translation of the tract in English. It is too long for insertion in this journal, and too short for considerable extracts, we will therefore content ourselves with giving a summary view of its contents. The general character of his arguments tends of itself to develop the state of feeling among the natives on this subject. There is no appeal made to their national honour, no attempt to kindle their indignation against so disgraceful a custom, no endeavour to arouse their feelings against a practice so repugnant to every principle of humanity not that we suspect for a moment that the benevolent individual who composed it, would have hesitated to employ such arguments, had he not been convinced of their complete utility. The tract is in the form of a dialogue between an Advocate and an Opponent of the system. The advocate cites various passages from *Ungira*, *Vyas*, *Hareet*, and the *Rig-veda*, which enjoin or applaud the practice of self-immolation. Against these passages the opponent produces an extract from *Munoo*, the great Hindoo legislator, of whom the *Veda* itself says, that "Whatever *Munoo* has said is wholesome," which *Vrîhasputi* corroborates by adding, "Whatever is contrary to the law of *Munoo* is not commendable." The extract is as follows: "Let a widow emaciate her body, by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots, and fruits, but let her not, when her Lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man. Let her continue till death forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband."

From this passage the opponent infers, that as *Munoo* directs the widow after the death of her husband to pass

her whole life as an ascetic, he intended she should *remain alive* for this purpose, and hence that this direction of Munoo is totally opposed to the directions of the other sages, and that their authority must bend to that of this great legislator. The opponent then adduces as his next argument, the disesteem in which the generality of the Hindoo sages regard works of merit or demerit, or more properly, works done with the interested motive of gaining future happiness thereby, and to shew that these are not necessary to the attainment of what the Hindoos esteem the highest state of felicity, absorption in Brumhu, he quotes the following passage from the Veda "By living in the practice of regular and occasional duties the mind may be purified. Thereafter by hearing, reflecting and constantly meditating on the Supreme Being, absorption in Brumhu may be attained. Therefore, from a desire during life of future fruition, life ought not to be destroyed." The immolation of the widow being urged on her wholly on interested motives, that of enjoying, as its result, numerous ages of happiness with her deceased husband, is therefore opposed to that system, which, disregarding all actions connected with bodily enjoyment, magnifies the value of Divine knowledge as leading to absorption in Brumhu.

The advocate for the practice replies to this, that the later authorities in directing a woman to burn herself, do not contradict this law of Munoo, and supports this idea by saying that Munoo directs the performance of Sundhya or evening worship, but is silent as to worshipping Huri, by calling aloud on his name, while Vyas prescribes calling on the name of Huri, and adds that the words of Vyas do not contradict those of Munoo. He therefore infers that when Vishnoo and others command the widow to follow her husband through the

flames, they do not contradict the command of Munoo. This the opponent meets with the utmost ease by shewing that there is no analogy in the cases, the performance of Sundhya not preventing any one's invoking the name of Huri during another part of the day, while a woman's burning herself with her husband will infallibly prevent her living the life of an ascetic, and completely fixes the charge of contradicting the immutable laws of Munoo on those who have prescribed this practice, by quoting Ungira as declaring, that there is no other way known for a virtuous woman except her ascending the funeral pile of her husband, and Hareet as denouncing her refusal as a crime by declaring, that as long as a woman *shall not* burn herself alive after the death of her husband, she shall be subject to transmigration in a female form. The advocate for the practice endeavours to justify it farther by quoting the Rig-veda, and Hareet as commending it. This the opponent bears down by various passages esteemed sacred by the Hindoos, which reprobate men's performing religious rites merely from interested motives, and amongst the rest the following from the Bhagvut-Geeta, which he terms the essence of all the Smritees, Poorans and Itihases, "All those ignorant persons who attach themselves to the words of the Vedas that convey promises of fruition, consider those falsely alluring passages as leading to real happiness, and say that besides them there is no other reality. Agitated in their minds by these desires, they believe the abodes of the celestial Gods to be the chief object, and they devote themselves to those texts which treat of ceremonies and their fruits, and entice by promises of enjoyment. Such people can have no real confidence in the Supreme Being." These passages the advocate at length acknowledges to be indeed consistent with the

Vedas, with Munoo, and with the Bhagvat-Geeta, adding, however, " But from this I fear that the passages of the Vedas and other Shastras, that prescribe Concremation and Postcremation as the means of obtaining heavenly enjoyments, must be considered as *only meant to deceive* " This the opponent of the practice very dexterously obviates, by urging that these could intend no deception they only set before mankind *two* methods of obtaining happiness, the one excellent, the other mean and unworthy for those who are enveloped in desire, passion and cupidity, who if they had no shastras holding out rewards, would reject all shastras, and follow their own inclinations like an elephant unguided by the hook To prevent this, the shastra prescribes various ceremonies, among which is one for procuring the destruction of an enemy ' and of course this for destroying widows,

Unable to urge any thing better, its advocate insists, that, after all, a practice handed down to them by Hareet and others ought not to be set aside This his opponent meets, not only by saying that this argument is inconsistent with justice, but by urging the violation of their own rule in the very act of burning The direction is, that " the widow shall voluntarily quit life, ascending *the flaming pile* of her husband " "Now," says he, "you first bind down the widow along with the corpse of her husband, and then heap over her such a quantity of wood that she cannot rise At the time too of setting fire to the pile, you press her down with large bamboos In what passage of Hareet, or the rest, do you find authority for thus binding the woman according to your practice? This is, in fact, deliberate female murder " The advocate urges as an excuse for this horrid practice, that were the woman to shrink back from the flames, after having recited the usual incantations, it would be sinful, and be

self to death, and had even ascended the funeral pile, leaped out of the flames, and plunged herself into the river. Her relatives seized on her, and dragged her back to the pile, but she uttered the loudest cries, calling upon the officers of justice who attended, to save her from a forcible death. They instantly interposed their authority, and on finding that she steadfastly resisted the wishes of her relatives, ordered her to return home, and though this scene occurred in a large city highly bigoted to Hindooism, and in the presence of thousands of spectators, there was not the least attempt made to rescue her from the protection of the officers of government.

Before the late regulations of Government restricting the practice to the cases permitted in the shastras, many instances occurred of young widows, who, having refused to burn after approaching the flames, were forcibly thrown on the pile by their unfeeling relatives, that they might avoid the disgrace attached to a failure in such cases.

The use of force by means of bamboos is universal through Bengal, it is intended to prevent the possibility of the widow's escape from the flames, as such an act would reflect indelible disgrace on the family. The number of widows burnt in Bengal, however, exceeds by nearly three times, the number burnt in all the other provinces of Hindoost'han besides. Thus, in three cases out of four, a degree of force is used which renders all resistance on the part of the unhappy sufferer vain. This is totally contrary to the rules even of those shastras which command the practice, they strictly enjoin that the sacrifice shall be perfectly voluntary in every stage of its progress. Constraint, indeed, is forbidden by the very nature of the sacrifice. It is called a Sutee, because a woman devotes herself to the flames to prove that she has continued immovably faithful to her husband. Not

only, therefore, must the intention be voluntary, but to evince this, the act of immolation must not include the most distant idea of constraint. The use of bamboos is therefore at variance with the nature of the sacrifice, and with all the rules by which it is supported, and which direct, that she shall not ascend the pile before the flames are kindled. It is the *flaming pile* of her husband, that she is enjoined to ascend and the immense difference between ascending the *flaming* pile, and being bound firmly down before the flames are kindled, must be obvious to all.

The Supreme Government has now for several years lessened the sum of misery caused by this system by strictly forbidding the immolation of widows in cases where the Hindoo shastras have forbidden it. The age and circumstances of those who devote themselves to destruction, have thus become matter of examination, and we feel convinced that were government farther to extend its care to the circumstances which attend the act of immolation itself, much would be done by this alone towards the extinction of the practice, and surely if "a rigour beyond the laws" be ever tolerated, it should not be when the law has originated in the most savage barbarity, and is held doubtful by the wisest and most virtuous among the Hindoos themselves*—when its operation is levelled against the most amiable and helpless part of our Indian fellow-subjects. Under the influence of the former regulations, many females of tender age have

* Mritunjoy, the head pundit of the Supreme Court, has given it as his opinion, that Brumhacharya, or a life of mortification, is *the law* for a widow, and that burning with the husband is merely an alternative. Hence he argues that the alternative can never have the force of law.

been rescued from destruction, yet not a single murmur has been heard throughout the country, no one attempt has been made to counteract the wise and benign intentions of government, or to employ force in the cause of inhumanity. Were the use of bamboos forbidden also, and the horrid sacrifice made to assume the exact complexion which the shastras direct, we feel assured that the tranquillity of the country would not be disturbed for a single moment. And if the apprehension that the widow, unable to ascend the *burning* pile, might possibly, by a change of mind, reflect disgrace on the family on the spot destined for immolation, should in any case induce the relatives to dissuade her from incurring the risk, the advantage would be entirely on the side of humanity and justice. The immediate and complete interdiction of force in the act of burning the helpless widow, while it would be in exact unison with that benevolence which distinguishes our sway over these regions, would subject the natives to nothing more than the strict observance of their own rules.

ON THE BURNING OF WIDOWS *

WERE we to hear of a nation which, on her husband's death, subjected a widow to the loss of all her property, of which she might probably have brought him part as a dower, and which she had enjoyed with him from the time of their union and turned her out on the wide world (her lord and protector being dead) to labour—to beg—to steal—or to perish, with what feelings of indignation should we regard such a law and such a nation ! We should enquire, On what principle is this severity exercised on a helpless woman, precisely at the moment when her heart is torn with anguish through the loss of him on whom was fixed all her hope ? Were *imprisonment for life* added to this outrage, however, were the hapless widow deprived of her liberty, as well as of all her property, the moment death had closed the eyes of her husband, such a procedure would excite horror and indignation in every mind. What then should we say were we to hear for the first time, that in some newly discovered island, the death of the husband sealed the doom of the wife, however virtuous and exemplary in her conduct, that she was from that moment devoted to death,—and to death in its most dreadful form—to *be burnt to ashes* ! Such, however, is the case, not in some

lately discovered island, hitherto totally cut off from the rest of mankind, but in India, famed for her literature and civilization, and above all in Bengal, where Europeans are chiefly found, whose ideas the wise and candid among the natives are imbibing every day

How then is it possible that the murder of the amiable and defenceless, attended too with such circumstances of cruelty, should have continued so long? How is it that common humanity has not overleaped every bound, and constrained superstition to desist from a course so barbarous and inhuman? Among other reasons which might be mentioned, this certainly has its share *That the whole of the horrible deed is really concealed from view* Had the deed been constantly perpetrated in the sight of all, as was formerly the case in Smithfield,—had the helpless victim to superstition been bound to the stake in the open view of the multitude, as were formerly the victims to Romish bigotry—had the flames been suffered to kindle on her publicly—had the convulsions and agonies of the widow expiring in torments, often in the bloom of youth, been fully witnessed by the aged, the young, the neighbour, the near relative, humanity must have spoken out long ago, reflection must have been awakened in the public mind At least parents and relatives must have felt horror while anticipating the agonies which awaited a daughter or a beloved sister, the moment sickness, or even accident, rendered her a widow, and the voice of nature must have prevailed, and abolished a practice so destructive in its anticipation to the peace of every relative, whose heart was not steeled against all the feelings of humanity

But, instead of this, the agonies of the dying victim *are completely concealed*, while her shrieks are drowned in the noise and shouts of the ignorant multitude and the un-

feeling ministers of death, and thus the whole is as completely hidden from public view, as though the dreadful deed were perpetrated within the most secluded cloister. The concealment indeed is far more effectual, for in that case, though the shrieks might not assail the listening ear without, the imagination would unavoidably paint to itself the horrors of a daughter, a sister, or even an acquaintance expiring in the flames, in a manner scarcely less vivid than the real view. But the victim's being thus brought before the multitude in a state which scarcely leaves her the power of reflection, her being hastily led through certain ceremonies, and hurried to the pile by those whose countenances wear the appearance of hilarity and cheerfulness, bound to the dead body of her husband, and covered instantly with the fuel, as well as held down by a pressure which renders all resistance totally unavailing, hides all the horrors of death from the sight, while the shouts of the unthinking crowd which begin to rend the air the moment the torch is applied to the fatal pile, no less effectually conceal from the ear those agonizing shrieks, from which it is scarcely in nature to refrain at the touch of the flames. Thus completely are the multitude deluded—they think they witness all, while they witness nothing, and the unnatural jocularities, which, originating with the actors in this dreadful scene, generally pervades the whole crowd, removes every feeling of pity, and gives the whole rather the air of a joyous festival than of a funeral scene. The agonies, and shrieks, and dying groans of the unhappy victim, are witnessed by no one,—but by Him who is the Avenger of blood. But are these agonies the less real on this account? Is the anguish of this tremendous death the less felt? Let reason and humanity judge.

Without entering into the origin and cause of this

dreadful practice so deeply seated in the system of Hindooism itself, to do full justice to which would require a treatise instead of a short essay, we wish now merely to notice some of the most obvious circumstances which attend it. Among these let us consider for a moment who those are, who are doomed to undergo these agonies, unpitied, because never beheld. They are, *the most amiable part of the Hindoo race* ! In most cases they are females possessing some degree of wealth, for the very poor seldom thus devote themselves to death. They are not worth the labour requisite to work up their minds to a sufficient pitch of delusion. If the term be applicable to any female in the present state of Hindoo society, they are in general persons of *education* and whatever be the degree of polish and delicacy which accompany opulence, whatever the ideas included in a superior mode of living, they are in general possessed by those whom this dreadful custom marks for its victims. It follows, therefore, as a matter of course, that if among the higher ranks of society in this country there be any *delicacy of feeling*, it is possessed by these who may be said almost from their birth to be devoted to the flames.—And if there be any thing to be found of conjugal fidelity, it resides among these, since an extraordinary degree of conjugal affection, either real or ascribed, is made the lure by which these unhappy victims are betrayed to death, the enjoyment for numerous ages of the highest felicity with their deceased husbands, being held out as the bait to draw them on till they make the irrevocable declaration, that they will commit themselves to the flames. It is probable, therefore, that those who are thus cruelly murdered year by year, are in most instances the best educated, the most amiable, and the most virtuous of the Hindoo race.

By whom this crime is perpetrated, is worthy of the strictest enquiry. With the victims themselves it can scarcely be said to originate, for a few days previously, they are often as void of all desire to destroy themselves, as to destroy others, and they are generally averse to the deed till their minds are completely deluded by fallacious representations, and their heads turned with dreams of future happiness, impossible to be realized. But whatever delusion may reign in their minds, without the concurrence of the Husband's relatives, it would be perfectly harmless. *The deed is constantly encouraged by the Relatives of the Husband*, those of the wife, on the contrary, being generally on the side for which nature pleads, although her own son, if old enough, is obliged to kindle the pile prepared for his mother's destruction. It is, therefore, on the Husband's Relatives that the fate of every female of respectability and opulence is suspended, however young she may be, the moment her husband dies. and when it is considered, that they are bound to her by none of the ties of consanguinity, it will not appear strange if some one or all of the following reasons should in general so preponderate, as to doom to the flames one for whom they can have little or no personal feeling.

The honour of the family. This is supposed to rise in proportion to the number of unhappy victims, who can be mentioned as having devoted themselves to the flames. The husband's relatives of course claim for themselves a certain degree of credit for having surmounted feelings of affection, which they never possessed, as they generally regard the poor unhappy relict with the same apathy with which they view a log of wood intended for fuel, while the number of widows in their families devoting themselves to the flames apparently from love to their husbands, gives

rise to the idea that these relatives of theirs, possessed that excellence of character which rendered it impossible to survive their loss. That when the unhappy widow is regarded with the most perfect indifference, this alone should so weigh as to make them prefer her dying to her living, will create no surprise in those who are thoroughly acquainted with the native character.

The wish to get rid of a burden. A widow, though only twelve years of age, can never marry again. If her own relatives therefore be unwilling to support her, or not sufficiently opulent, she must live with the surviving relatives of the husband to the end of life. And although her life is far from being a plenteous or affluent one, yet a certain degree of expense is thus entailed on the family, and this possibly for a considerable number of years when she is left in the bloom of youth. The consideration of an expense therefore, though small, yet scarcely terminable within the space of their own lives, added to the trouble and vexation often arising from female relatives living together who can scarcely be expected to have any affection for each other, may possibly make them wish to rid themselves at once of a heavy burden, when it can be done in a way which, instead of being esteemed dishonourable, or any proof of the want of affection, on the contrary reflects a high degree of lustre on the character of the family. At least this is a temptation which humanity would not throw in the way of a Hindoo who sets so little value on human life.

This is heightened by another consideration. It has been just observed, that these widows, however young, can never marry again. Now while in purity reigns among these very relatives of the husband, perhaps in such a degree as to attach to itself no kind of disgrace, a deviation from purity of conduct in a widow, would, in the

public estimation, fix an indelible stain on the family of the deceased husband. When therefore the hazard of this dishonour through perhaps a long life, is present to minds, in which no natural affection towards a brother's widow is supposed to exist, it will excite little surprise that men who, if report may be credited, in some instances make no scruple of hewing in pieces a wife of their own on a mere suspicion of inconstancy, should, on the death of her husband, decide also on the death of his unhappy relict, who, should she live, instead of contributing to the support or the honour of the family, would entail on it

revenue of these helpless orphans, nor possibly for the dilapidation of their whole property. The history of orphans even in Christian countries sufficiently shews us, how dangerous in the hands of presumptive heirs would be such a power of removing, under a religious pretence, the mother of rich but helpless orphans. All these, therefore, are so many temptations to the destruction of a widow, which, through this dreadful practice, may be accomplished without the least suspicion being excited of the real views of those interested in her death, and were these suspected, still without that public virtue being excited in the country which would urge any one to step forward and save the widow from death, and the orphans from oppression and poverty. Whoever considers all these circumstances, and reflects that a mother may thus abandon to the mercy of those who are presumptive heirs to all his possessions, however great, *an Infant Son only two years old*, will cease to wonder that so many widows are encouraged to destroy themselves, particularly as this dreadful practice is not confined to brahmuns, but extends itself to the writer cast,—and even as low as to those who practise the trade of a barber!

Whatever be the delusive ideas which may apparently urge a widow to self-destruction, as the hope of her enjoying numerous ages of felicity in company with her husband,—of expiating the offences of her late husband and his ancestors, and those of both her father and mother's race, with other things of this nature, there are other considerations which cannot but come still nearer to the mind of the unhappy widow. She cannot but be aware, that those who have encouraged her in these fond hopes, are either those in whose power she is completely for the rest of her life, or such as are intimate with them, for although the husband's relatives affect to dissuade her from

the deed, it cannot be difficult to discern which way their minds really lean. From these, then, even the slightest hint, *that they wish her to die*, must operate on a widow of delicacy and sensibility, like a sentence of death pronounced by a judge. With what feelings could she commit herself for life to the mercy of those who had discovered this wish in the slightest degree, and felt in the least disappointed by her refusing to precipitate herself into the flames, particularly when the laws of the country provide her so little relief against any unkindness or barbarity she might hereafter experience from them? The law itself indeed insists, that while she is never to marry again, she is also to lay aside every thing like ornament for the rest of her days, and every sign of cheerfulness; that she is never to make a full meal, and that one day in every week she is to devote wholly to fasting and grief to the end of life. In these circumstances it is almost impossible that any degree of ill-treatment which the resentment of her husband's disappointed relatives might dispose them to inflict on her, could interest her neighbours in her sufferings so as to procure her redress, particularly when the interior of a Hindoo habitation, surrounded as it often is with walls, is nearly as impervious as an ancient castle, and the female relatives are scarcely more in the public view, than were formerly the unhappy inmates of its dungeons. In these circumstances, therefore, it is not strange, if, at the most distant intimation of this nature from those on whose kindness depends every future mitigation of her lot, and this prospect before her in case of a refusal, a widow of sensibility and reflection should feel almost distracted, and prefer a speedy death to the unknown horrors of her future destiny.

There is also another fact which ought not to be overlooked. Certain brahmuns perform the ceremonies ob-

served at the funeral pile on which a widow sacrifices herself. These brahmins receive even from the most indigent families something on a widow's actually devoting herself to the flames, and from some wealthy families, as much as two hundred Rupees on these occasions. While, then, it is the obvious interest of these brahmins that the wife should be induced to destroy herself when the husband dies, they have access to every family, and are acquainted with the age and circumstances of the various inhabitants, especially of those who are wealthy. That they should constantly recommend this dreadful practice, and prepare the female mind for the perpetration of the deed, particularly in cases where the husband is aged or sickly, is the natural effect of their caring for their own support. But these brahmins, as they are in some cases the family priests, are in habits of familiar acquaintance with the husband's relatives, and have much to expect from them. In what dreadful circumstances then must a helpless female stand, who has for her spiritual adviser on the subject of her living or dying, a man who has every kindness to expect from those who are presumptive heirs to the property of her infant son, or who may merely dread her devolving on them as a burden to the end of life! Nor is it necessary to suppose that brahmins in forwarding the views of an infirm husband's relatives, and preparing the mind of the wife for self-destruction, should consider themselves as actual auxiliaries in the murder of a fellow-creature. They of course must be supposed to be as much habituated to the employment, from which they derive their gain, as a Slave Captain formerly was to kidnapping and selling slaves, of whom probably a third died in the middle passage through ill-treatment and want of air. They may possibly regard the act as meritorious, rather than cruel, and admire those relatives who thus

wish to raise the reputation of their families, through the death of their brother's widow. And in this case even the distant prospect of a large remuneration, may urge them so to work on the mind of a simple, artless female, whose age is perhaps under twenty, that at the moment of the husband's death, no persuasions shall be needed to induce her to make the fatal declaration—beyond the insidious *dissuasions* of her husband's relatives, increasing her desire by affectedly doubting her resolution and really inflaming her vanity. Were these relatives, however, sincere in these dissuasions, they have it always in their power to prevent the act, as both the preparation of the funeral pile, and all the cost and expenses of the widow's destruction devolve wholly on them, without the exception of the fee to the brahmun who thus assists in the actual murder of the young, the amiable, and the defenceless.

That other feelings than those of unconquerable affection for a husband, often twice or thrice their own age—or than any inspired by a steady belief in those wonderful tales of conjugal felicity to be enjoyed with him for boundless ages, influence the minds of the greater part of these unhappy victims, might be shewn by numerous instances wherein widows have been prevented by accident from burning.—Of this kind is an instance which occurred a few months ago in a village about four miles from S—

self with something belonging to her husband. The youngest not being prevented, was burned with the corpse of her husband. The eldest solemnly engaged to burn herself a month after her confinement, till which period she was taken home by her own parents. She at first expressed such displeasure at being thus denied the opportunity of burning herself, as to beat herself severely, and possibly accelerate the time of her confinement, but at the expiration of the month after that period, when called upon to fulfil her engagement, she had considered the subject more at leisure, and being at home in the house of her own parents, she positively refused to destroy herself, nor could all the appeals made to her feelings—all the threats and reproaches poured upon her, alter her resolution in the least degree. She was in the house of her own parents, and completely independent of her husband's relatives, and as every thing which could be done was of course confined to verbal exertion, she determined to remain with her parents, where she continues till this day.

As this instance is by no means a solitary one, we have little reason to conclude that the desire to destroy themselves is more firmly fixed in the minds of multitudes besides, than it was in the mind of this young woman. The apparent wish to die which is thus factitiously produced, is in most instances the mere effect of circumstances created by others, and therefore no more excusatory of the guilt of deliberate murder, than would be a man's intoxicating another with wine, or any deleterious drug, so as to deprive him of the power of resistance, that he might secure his destruction. Such then are the circumstances in which the most amiable and virtuous among the Hindoo women are constantly placed, circumstances, as already hinted, by no means confined to the

sacred tribe, but extended to the lowest casts among the Hindoos, as often as there is credulity enough to render the delusion sufficiently strong to become fatal

If these circumstances be carefully weighed, it will appear that this inhuman practice has not even those pretensions to its being a *Religious* Ceremony, which most people have been ready to imagine. That it has no foundation in any peculiar command given in the shastras, we have already had occasion to shew in our strictures on that valuable tract on the subject ascribed to Rama-mo-huna-rayā, which was reviewed in a former number. Nor indeed is there in the ceremony itself any thing that marks it as being peculiarly of a religious nature. The woman devotes herself to no deity, her professed object is merely that of rejoining her husband in a state of happiness. It is true that certain brahmuns officiate and obtain a sum of money on the occasion. But this is not peculiar to this ceremony. In almost every concern of life, brahmuns are called in, and there are few which are not to them a source of profit.

Nor is this practice by any means prevalent in other parts of Hindoost'han in the degree in which it now exists in Bengal. Of this the following letter contains a proof, which was sent us on the subject some months ago by a gentleman who has been some years resident in Hindoost'han.

shee (a *kshatriya*), a man of about forty-five, informs me that he never saw but one, and that was at Lucknow, the victim, a widow of a Cashmerian pundit — There can be no doubt but a law of prevention would neither create surprise nor resistance in these provinces, and were it enacted for them only, it would lead to its being established hereafter in Bengal, should the government hesitate as to the propriety of making it more general at present. Feeling you have done little towards a more glorious work until the minds of the natives be prepared by some change from their present insensibility and cruelty, I have written more at length than I intended, and beg your excuse for it."

This letter furnishes a pretty strong proof, that the cruel practice has in it more of the nature of a civil, than a religious ceremony. It is a well-known fact that in Bengal, at the present time, the Hindoos are far less tenacious of their religious tenets and ceremonies, than in almost any other part of India, that they are far less careful respecting caste, and that the brahmans in numerous instances are guilty of actions which according to the strictness of the law respecting caste would degrade them completely. We have heard it mentioned as the opinion of Hindoos well acquainted with the subject, that were the law of caste enforced in all its strictness, there would be few families around who would be wholly safe. Yet the number of widows who are thus put to death scarcely at all decreases. It seems indeed to increase in the vicinity of the metropolis, where the greatest laxness is to be witnessed relative to things wholly religious. How can we account for this vast disparity in the number of these murders perpetrated in Hindoosthan, and in the lower part of Bengal, without having recourse to other motives than those of a religious nature? But the

moment we recur to *other* reasons for the continuation of this murderous custom, they present themselves on every side. The want of feeling manifested by the natives to their own countrymen when in danger of death by accident, as in a storm, or even when actually drowning, is known to most Europeans. The venality with which they are charged relative to oaths, is not without foundation, yet these must often involve life itself, as well as character and property. That they should then be peculiarly tender of the life of a brother's widow, who must at the best be a burden on them to the end of life, and who *may* bring disgrace on the family, is a thing scarcely to be expected. And when we consider the circumstances in which the widow is placed, together with that want of regard for human life, which is both the effect of their religious system and the characteristic of the nation, instead of being surprised that so many widows are every year cruelly destroyed, we shall rather wonder that any escape these fatal lures, when the husband's relatives so evidently encourage the practice.

Such then is the real state of the case respecting the burning of widows, which so many have been almost ready to tolerate under the idea of its being a most sacred religious ceremony, with which it would be sacrilege to interfere. With almost as much justice might the Slave Trade have been regarded with veneration, as a sacred relic of antiquity handed down from the earliest ages,—or the practice of killing all prisoners taken in war,—or that of sacrificing hecatombs of men at the funeral of a favourite chief,—or the conduct of certain banditti in this country, who (from time immemorial no doubt) are said to seize men and immolate them at the shrine of their imagined deity. It has scarcely enough of religious ceremony connected with it to varnish it over with the name

of religion. It is generally accompanied with the most unfeeling jocularity. Instead of its being a deed of mere superstition, there is reason to fear that it is too often the offspring of the meanest self-interest. It has not even the features of religion. *It is not binding on all.* It falls only on one sex, while the deed is perpetrated by the other, whom it can never reach, and of that sex it affects only one description of persons, and with these it is professedly optional. were it a religious ceremony however, it would be binding on all. But this class, while generally the most amiable and virtuous, are the most defenceless, —are left as fully in the power of relatives who do not *profess* any feeling for them, as the kid when in the paw of the tiger. It is never equally the interest of the husband's relatives that the widow should live, as that she should be burnt to death. With the former there is connected, *in every case*, a certain loss of reputation, and the expense of maintaining a person to the end of life in whose welfare they feel no kind of interest, with the latter, the full removal of this burden, and a high degree of reputation to their families.

So much do these circumstances affect the case, that were second marriages esteemed honourable, and the children born of them permitted to inherit equally with those of a first marriage, a practice sanctioned not merely by the laws of all Christian nations, but even those of Greece and Rome notwithstanding their idolatry, many think, that this alone would gradually extinguish the practice. But is it right that in a country so richly endowed with the bounties of Providence, the mere question of interest, the loss of a few rupees annually, should be suffered to doom the most amiable, the most virtuous of our Hindoo subjects, almost daily to the most cruel death in nature, merely because their being uninformed in mind renders

them liable to the grossest deceptions, and their being unable to support themselves, renders them dependent? On the means of its abolishment, however, it is impossible for us to enlarge at present. we would only intreat all our readers to remember, that *murder concealed from public view, is murder still*, and that our not actually witnessing the dreadful deed, when we are certain that it is committed, will do little towards exonerating us from guilt

After these observations were penned, a friend put into our hands, a small work in defence of this practice just published in quarto without name or date, but a manuscript note on the first blank leaf informs us that it is published by *Cassee-nul'h-turku bagish*, by the desire of Calachund-bhose. It is in the form of a dialogue, written in Bengalee with an English Translation. This work we shall carefully examine in a future Number.

III

REVIEW OF A PAMPHLET

ON THE SUBJECT OF BURNING WIDOWS WRITTEN
IN BENGAL BY A LEARNED PUNDIT, TO WHICH
IS ADDED AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Small Quarto, pp 48 *

THIS work, small as it is, is in a high degree interesting, merely from the circumstances in which it appears, and the subject it embraces. It is the product of a Native Press, and is among the first attempts yet made for these three thousand years, to appeal to the public respecting the justness and propriety of practices received as sacred by the Hindoos, from their being sanctioned by antiquity. It forms one of the fruits which have arisen from the introduction of printing into India, and is the result of that wise and benign sway exercised by Britain over her possessions in the east. Under the Moosulman or the Hindoo governments which formerly existed here, nothing of this kind could have appeared, as no one durst venture publicly to question the propriety of any practice which professed to derive its sanction from the Koran, or the Hindoo Shastras, its advocates would not have found it necessary to bring any discussion respecting it before the public, much less to submit those arguments on which it might rest for support to public decision.

Such, however, have been even the oblique effects of that diffusion of light which the residence of Europeans has produced in India, that the natives themselves begin

to feel the necessity of recurring to reason as the test of their conduct in things both civil and religious. They cannot but perceive that this is the line of conduct observed by their rulers themselves, that no length of time, no weight of authority, is thought sufficient to support a practice which may be plainly contrary to justice and humanity, and that the inveteracy of any abuse, so far from forming a reason for its continuance, furnishes only stronger motives for its speedy abolition. It was impossible that this should long be altogether without effect on the minds of the natives: they have already begun in a certain degree to think for themselves, and the consequence is, that long prescription in cases decidedly opposed to righteousness, begins in some measure to lose its weight, and while the advocates of humanity lay before their countrymen their reasons for doubting the propriety of usages evidently contrary to its dictates, the supporters of them are constrained, however unwillingly, to meet their opponents in the public arena, and submit to the judgment of the spectators the grounds on which they solicit their continued suffrages.

papal superstition in Britain from its establishment to its downfall,—whether more fatherless orphans shall be deprived in every succeeding year of their only surviving parent and friend, than were thus bereaved in any year by the most tremendous pestilence which ever raged in Britain,—or whether the voice of humanity shall triumph over superstition, folly, and cruelty

The occasion of this pamphlet is as follows for some years past the burning of such a number of widows annually, has greatly affected the minds of many among the British inhabitants of this Presidency, who have been constrained to witness these melancholy scenes Previously to the Marquis Wellesley's departure in 1806, Dr Carey, through the Rev Dr Buchanan, submitted to Government three memorials on this subject The first of these included the practice of exposing infants, which existed chiefly in the north of Bengal, and that of persons devoting themselves voluntarily to death at Saugur island, and in certain other places The two last practices were abolished by an order of Government, but the burning of widows has been suffered to continue to the present day In consequence of many Europeans having however expressed their surprise and grief at the prevalence of a practice so contrary to humanity, many natives have at length begun to reflect on the subject, and to enquire into the grounds on which it is still continued In the course of the last year Rama-mohuna-roya addressed his countrymen on the subject, in a well-written pamphlet, reviewed in our number for December last, in which he insists that the practice has in reality no foundation in the Hindoo Shastras themselves To this pamphlet, the work under consideration is an answer drawn up by some of the pundits in Calcutta, who feel unwilling that

so laudable a practice as that of burning their widows shall fall into disuse. It is sent forth without a name and without a title-page, but from private information, as well as from the pamphlet itself, we find that it is the work of men by no means deficient in learning. It is written in the form of a Dialogue between an Advocate for the system of burning widows, under the term "Pidhaok," and an Opponent, here termed "Nished-hok." In the body of the work every authority supposed to countenance the inhuman custom, and every scrap of *Sungskrita* found on its side among Hindoo writers, are given in the original text, as well as translated into Bengalee. The work is valuable therefore from its containing every thing found in the Hindoo Shastras in favour of this barbarous practice and if all this fall short of an absolute and indispensable injunction, the practice will be found to be as illegal according to the Hindoo Shastras, as it is inhuman in itself. This work is evidently intended for the perusal of Europeans also, as an English translation (if it deserve the name) is prefixed to the original work. This pamphlet not being put into our hands till the piece on this subject given in our number for July was put to press, we were unable to notice it at that time. We now, however, redeem the pledge then given to examine it on the first convenient opportunity, in doing which, while we study brevity as much as possible, we deem it a duty we owe to humanity to attempt it in a manner sufficiently full to enable our readers to judge of the merits of the question, as well relative to the foundation on which it is said to rest in the Hindoo Shastras, as respecting the answers here given to the objections urged against the practice by the friends of humanity. In our extracts from this pamphlet we prefer quoting its own language for the sake of doing it every

degree of justice, and shall content ourselves with merely adding a sentence or a word where the translation is not sufficiently intelligible. The work commences by the Advocate's urging the claims of his cause in the following pompous and sweeping declaration.

"It is ordained by (the) *Srutee*, *Smritee*, *Pooranas*, and other Sacred Books, that the women, on the death of their husbands, should die in *Shahu-muruna*, that is, to burn (should burn) 'themselves alive with the corpse of their respective husbands, and that, in want of the corpse, (they) should die in *Unoo muruna*, that is, to burn (should burn) with something belonging to their husbands which usages the great sages during all the four ages of the world, viz *Suttwa*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kalce*, have regularly maintained in their codes. It is very improper that you throw obstacles to prevent such a matter." To this the Opponent is made to reply, "You say this is improper for want of knowledge of the *Shashtra* or Law, but when you know the *Shashtra*, you will no more say so."

This forms the signal for the Advocate's unmasking all his batteries, and pouring forth on the poor Opponent, every sentence and scrap of *Sanskrita* in support of the practice, which he had been able to muster up. The chief of these authorities is that of *Ungeera*, who, however, does little more than recommend the practice. We give his opinion in the Advocate's own translation. "The woman that mounts the funeral pile of her deceased husband, equals herself to *Uroondhootee* the wife of *Vushisht'ha*, and enjoys bliss in heaven with her own husband. She that accompanies her husband to the other world, dwells in heaven for three and a half cotee years, (thirty-five millions,) which is equal to the number of hairs on an human body, and with (by) her own power taking her husband up, in the same manner as a snake-

amounts only to a *recommendation* of it from certain advantages the widow is deluded with the hope of obtaining, that is, the enjoyment of happiness with her husband—by no means to eternity, however, but for as many years as there are hairs on the human body, *after which*, gentle reader, she must descend to the earth again, and undergo all that vicissitude of births, which, in the opinion of the Hindoos, constitutes future punishment.

The Advocate for this practice then goes on to notice another authority, that of *Vishnoo-Risee*, who, however, leaves burning *perfectly optional*, in the following language “After the demise of a husband, his wife shall either devote herself to *Brumhacharya*, (a life of austerity) or mount the funeral pile of her husband” To do away the force of this option, the Advocate adds, that the choice of a life of austerity would involve in it eight faults or crimes, but which he has not mentioned that the reader might judge of their nature or magnitude, and that even this option is therefore to be rejected, and thus the hapless widow, according to him, must inevitably consign herself to the flames, if she would discharge her duty to her deceased husband. He then goes on to state the authority for *Unoo-muruna*, or a woman’s burning herself after her husband’s death with some article belonging to him ‘a practice by no means uncommon at the present day. For this he adduces the authority of only a solitary writer, the author of the *Mutsya-Poorana*, in these words “In case of the demise of a husband in a distant country, the chaste wife should purify her person by bathing, and then taking her husband’s shoes or another thing, enter into a burning pile to be prepared on purpose” This he justifies by saying, that the *Rig-eda* declares such women not to be guilty of self-murder, which plainly indicates, that if this be self-

that the Advocate for the burning system may obtain an opportunity of invalidating them. He first adduces the famous legislator *Munoo*, whose authority is paramount to that of every succeeding writer, as prescribing an opposite course for widows in the following language: "Listen to the law which *Munoo* has prescribed for the husbandless women. 'After the death of husbands their wives should make themselves lean, by living upon sweet flowers, roots and fruits', never mind the name of a man, and until the time of their respective death, with resignation and restriction continue to observe the laws prescribed for *Ekputnees*, (those who have married but one husband) that is, they should, with the desire of obtaining the state of chaste women, devote themselves to the law prescribed for *Brumhachurya*. As thousands of young brahmuns, who before their arriving to the full age devoted themselves to *Brumhachurya* and begot no children, have gone to *Surga* or Heaven, the chaste women in like manner, who after their husband's death devote themselves to the law of *Brumhachurya*, may attain bliss in heaven, though issueless.' Hence, says the Opponent, *Munoo* has ordained, that women after their husband's death should spend the remaining part of their lives in *Brumhachurya*." This decision of *Munoo*'s the Opponent confirms by adducing the following corroborative declaration from one of the Vedas, "Know that whatever *Munoo* pronounced, is a medicine for the soul," and another from *Vrihasputee*, "A Sreeti inconsistent with that of *Munoo* is not praiseworthy."

To get rid of this decision of *Munoo*, which completely forbids the practice, is the grand object of this work, and for the sake of this alone is it quoted. This the Advocate, knowing that no commentator can erect himself into a Law-giver and abolish the law itself, first attempts by

affirming, (that which no one denies,) that it is only the Smritee *inconsistent* with Munoo which is unworthy of regard, but as a woman can live a life of abstinence and chastity after burning herself, these two of course are *not* inconsistent! Feeling ashamed of this argument, he quits it, and adducing the following sentence from *Jyymnee*, "where there arises an inconsistency among laws, that maintained by many is preferable," attempts to infer, that the *recommendation* of *Ungeera*, *Purasura*, and *Harecta*, ought to outweigh *the law itself*, enacted by Munoo. Deserting this argument as untenable, however, he quotes a passage from the *Rig-veda*, recommending the practice of burning, and affirms that the law of Munoo on the subject means nothing more than that a woman who may by any accident be *prevented* from burning herself with her husband, or afterwards with one of his old shoes, ought to devote herself to a life of austerity. The author of this pamphlet, while he professes to set the authority of the *Rig-veda* against that of the great Hindoo legislator, is however well aware that the *Vedas* contradict each other on this very point. That he may in some way or other obviate this discrepancy, so fatal to his argument, he now introduces the Opponent as quoting a well known passage from the *Veda* which forbids the burning of widows, in the following words "As by means of living still the duties usual and occasional can be performed to purify the mind, and as by hearing of (and) fixing our mind and devoting our soul to *Brumha* or the Supreme Spirit, we can attain it (final beatitude or absorption in *Brumha*), no woman should therefore spend her life, that is, suffer death, in hopes of attaining *Surga* or bliss in heaven." From this the Opponent infers, that as a widow is forbidden to throw away her life with the hope of obtaining connubial bliss for a limited time in heaven, the

authority of those who recommend a widow's burning herself with this hope, is completely nullified, and that it is clearly the determination of the Veda, as well as the command of Munoo, that a widow ought not to burn herself, but to embrace a life of abstinence and chastity.

This is the doctrine which it is the object of the writer of this pamphlet to overthrow. After the Opponent has thus stated it, therefore, the Advocate for the burning system urges first, that to infer from the authority of Munoo and the Veda, that a woman, instead of burning herself, ought to embrace a life of abstinence and chastity, would strip the writings of those who recommend her burning herself of all authority¹ an overwhelming argument truly. He then adduces a sentence from Munoo, to shew that when one Smṛiti appears to have one meaning and another a different one, *both are to be held as law*¹. The plain inference from this would be, that a widow ought to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pile, and to embrace a life of austerity too¹. To confirm this wonderful exposition, and preserve the authority of those who in their zeal for burning have happened to contradict their own celebrated lawgiver, the Advocate quotes the following contradictory sentence by way of illustration. "In the Otiratra, or the oblations of clarified butter offered to the consecrated fire, the Shorassee* is to be taken, and in the Otiratra the Shorassee is *not* to be taken." The just meaning of which contrary Sutras, says he, is, that if in this sacrifice the Shorassee be taken or received, the sacrifice is superlatively meritorious, but if it be not, the deed is still complete and advantageous. From this illustration the writer in the person of the Advocate infers, that if a widow wishes to attain connubial

* Shorassee, the pot containing the clarified butter and other ingredients.

bliss in heaven, she may burn herself, but if she wishes final beatitude, she may embrace a life of abstinence and self-denial, and then adds triumphantly, "See therefore that a woman's burning herself for the sake of connubial bliss in heaven, has no way been forbidden." The whole of this, if it have any meaning, only goes to say, that even by these authorities, if a widow desires final beatitude she is not commanded to burn herself, and that according to them, all is *merely matter of option*. Thus then the whole hitherto advanced by the Advocate for the burning system is, that by their great legislator it is not commanded, but forbidden, and by those commentators who abrogate the law they pretend to explain, it is merely *recommended*, and left perfectly optional. But a further examination of the subject will shew, that this recommendation, while viewed by themselves as degrading in the highest degree, is subversive of the whole system of Hindooism. To illustrate this part of the subject, however, it will be necessary to recur for a moment to the creed of the Hindoos relative to future happiness.

The Hindoos throughout India believe the human soul to form an integral part of *Brahma* or the Deity, and hence esteem the summit of future bliss to consist in what they deem final beatitude, or absorption into *Brahma*, of whom they believe their souls to be a part. To the attainment of this all their endeavours are directed, for the sake of it the most tremendous austerities are performed, and nothing beyond this is supposed to be within the wish of man. But beside this, there are, according to their ideas, many heavens or inferior stages of bliss, to be obtained by certain meritorious deeds. None of these however is considered as lasting, but the duration of every state of bliss is, according to them, proportioned to the merit of the deed of which it is esteemed the reward.

After this period is expired, the person is expected to be born on earth again, and to undergo numerous vicissitudes of births till his mind be so purified as to obtain final beatitude or absorption into the deity, which alone secures a person from the misery of future transmigrations. Their state of misery indeed is esteemed no more lasting than that of happiness, but every kind of suffering therein (for there is supposed to be a great variety) is supposed to be proportioned in duration to the demerits of the sufferers, after which they also are said to be born again on the earth, and there to undergo all the vicissitudes of transmigration till they become sufficiently pure to obtain absorption into the deity. Hence a woman who may burn herself for the sake of living with her husband in heaven for a certain period, on its expiration descends to the earth, and, according to the Hindoos, she may be found in hell in the course of years. For this reason the wise and learned among them treat these evanescent stages of bliss with contempt, and contend that nothing is worthy of pursuit but final beatitude or absorption, which puts an end to all future misery. Hence, a woman's burning herself to obtain connubial bliss in heaven for a certain period, is deemed by them unspeakably inferior to her obtaining final beatitude through a life of abstinence and chastity. The recommendation in which the Advocate triumphs therefore, even upon his own principles, ought to have been precisely the reverse of what he has made it, since that line of conduct ought to be recommended to all, which is supposed to secure them *highest happiness*.

The Opponent however is represented as approving of this decision, but for the sake of its being answered, he is then made to urge another objection in the following words: "As in various shastrs contempt has been poured on actions done from cupidity, a woman's burning herself

from such motives is by no means proper" He then quotes the *Kuthopunshut*, as declaring, that while the pursuit of the system of Sacred Wisdom is considered safe, he who pursues the other system which includes a widow's burning herself, degrades his own nature This he further corroborates by a long quotation from the *Bhagavat Geeta*, which charges such as follow this system with acting only from cupidity and ambition This is correct, for these writers who thus recommend the performance of various religious deeds though done from the basest motives, prescribe certain sacrifices for the sake of obtaining wealth, some to obtain heavenly bliss,—and some to secure the destruction of an enemy¹ The whole of this system, therefore, is by their best writers regarded as having in it nothing of the nature of virtue, but as being in reality the indulgence of cupidity, ambition, and malice, which dispositions, indicating an impure mind, are the very reverse of that which they deem necessary to final beatitude Among these the Opponent properly classes a widow's burning herself with her husband's corpse, with the view of enjoying connubial bliss in heaven for a certain period, and intimates, that if actions of this kind are not evil, they are at least unnecessary This fires the Advocate for the burning system, who to overwhelm his adversary at once, exclaims, "Listen then to a Srutee, (a quotation from the *Veda*), 'A man wishing heaven for himself shall perform *Ushwa-medha-jauga*,' (the sacrifice of a horse), and again, 'A man wishing heaven for himself shall perform *Jotistuma-jauga*' These and other Srutees, are they to lose their *souls*? that is, to have no effect? Say, what is your answer" The Opponent humbly bows beneath the weight of this rebuke, and acknowledges that the Srutees which commend selfish actions are not void and useless, but intended for

those who, previously filled with "amours, wrath, and covetousness," are not inclined to enter disinterestedly into the service of the Supreme God, and that without these Srutees enjoining them thus to sacrifice from cupidity or malice, they, freed from all restriction, would be like an elephant without his guide. To prevent this, says he, certain *jaugas* were ordained to be performed by them; as *sena-jauga*, by one wishing the death of his enemy, *pootroshi-jauga*, by one longing for a son, and *jotistuma-jauga*, by one wishing bliss in heaven. This appenses the Advocate, who having thus secured the validity of these commands for performing devotional acts from cupidity, ambition, or malice, admits, that while these deeds are good, still actions done from superior motives are somewhat more praiseworthy. This concession, which might seem unguarded, is in reality made with the view of enabling the Opponent to bring out the last objection he has left, that the Advocate may demolish it like a man of straw. This is couched in the following words:

"*Nessedhok*, If you maintain that the disinterested actions are better than those self-interested, why do you then instead of permitting husbandless women to adopt the law of (disinterested) *Brumbachurya*, which gives final beatitude, endeavour to preserve the system of self-interested actions of *Shuhu-muruna* and *Onoo-muruna*, which produce (merely) bliss in heaven?"

This argument, which the Advocate was aware must appear on the face of the subject, and must weigh in favour of a life of abstinence and chastity in preference to burning, as much as eternal beatitude is to be preferred to a continual vicissitude of misery, he now proceeds to obviate. This he first attempts by urging that a woman in embracing a life of abstinence and chastity would still do it with a view to final beatitude, and therefore from

self-interested motives—hence, as burning herself would also rescue her husband from the pit—he might be driven into for slaying a brahmin, or a friend, or being ungrateful, together with the three generations before-mentioned, and enable the woman to “get herself rid of her feminine sex,” he esteems it far more desirable that she should burn.

To this conclusive argument the Opponent replies, “Now your sayings are consonant with the shastras.” Still, however, he suggests the *probability* of women’s attaining the state of final beatitude, were they, after the death of their husbands, “to be disciplined in sacred wisdom, which by burning themselves they can never attain.” To this the Advocate for the burning system has an unanswerable argument ready, that all instruction would be totally vain, for, says he, “it would be attended with no other success than to condemn them for both the one and the other:” in other words, either they would not live the life of chastity recommended, or they would be too dull to do it from proper motives. He concludes the argument with saying, “It is, therefore, very improper that the women who have never been conscious of so much as the meaning of the word Wisdom, shall (should) be desired to follow the system of sacred knowledge.” No other mode remains for the poor creatures, therefore, but that of preventing their going astray,—or of living chastely from wrong motives, by previously burning them alive. The Opponent is now completely silenced, and at once gives up his argument.

We have now before us the actual grounds on which all those who oppose the abolishment of the practice, still desire to preserve this privilege of burning alive their mothers, their sisters, and their daughters. It is not because it is sanctioned by the Hindoo law for their greatest

Legislator whose authority is paramount to every other, *positively forbids it* by enjoining on widows a contrary course. It is not that those few writers who have *recommended* the practice (for none of them have had the audacity to *command* it in opposition to their great legislator,) recommend it as a superior course, the dictate of more exalted virtue, for they themselves despise the course they thus recommend to the poor widow, and regard with the utmost contempt the motive and principle of action they endeavour to infuse into her mind — But this unparalleled course of murder is practised *wholly as a preventive!* But as a preventive of what? The effects of their dullness! their inability to comprehend “the instructions of Sacred Wisdom!” What then would be these effects? That they would live a life of abstinence and chastity from improper motives, from a desire after final beatitude! and thus losing final beatitude, only obtain heaven. Truly their thus forcing their burning system on the poor widow, from principles of such exalted benevolence, outdoes all that the Roman Catholics have ever done in the way of burning heretics out of pure pity to their souls. Yet what does this burning system itself profess to hold out to the poor widow? Only a little evanescent bliss for a limited time. As for the other part, the poor widow’s dragging her murderous or ungrateful husband out of the hands of *Yuma*, as a snake-catcher drags a snake out of his hole, it were much better not done. If he has died under the dominion of such barbarous, or base and ungrateful dispositions, it were better far to leave him in the hands of *Yuma* for a season, to be taught better principles, than to take him with her to heaven with these feelings of ingratitude, barbarity, and murder remaining within him. A wretched heaven, indeed, she would be likely to experience with such

a monster during these thirty-five millions of years. If he did not murder *her* there, it would be merely because she could not become mortal again till she has worn out this long period of misery. What then is even pretended as the superior advantage of burning? Nothing while on their own principles it is optional, the option is quite against the widow's interests. By choosing a life of abstinence and chastity, she may attain final beatitude, and even according to them she secures a certain degree of bliss, though she should be so dull as to forfeit final beatitude through living with this alone in view, while they allow that final beatitude can never be attained by her burning herself. But is it to be endured that a poor widow should be burnt merely on account of dulness and stupidity? Is it thus that their mothers and sisters are to be treated? Would they not shrink at burning alive even a beast on the funeral pile of its master? Surely it is horrid beyond expression that relatives so dear should be urged to the burning pile, to prevent their living a chaste and virtuous life from a wrong motive merely through dulness, and at the same time be told that it is improper to offer them the least instruction on a subject so important, because they do not as yet know the meaning of the word wisdom.

But this honest declaration, that their chief motive for supporting this system of burning is furnished by women's dulness and stupidity, brings to light a part of the creed of these advocates for Matricide, which few ever suspected to belong to Hindooism. The whole of the sex, every mother, and sister, and daughter, are hereby doomed to *interminable misery*, since they are declared to be such that it would be improper for them even *to be desired* to follow that system of sacred knowledge universally esteemed by the Hindoo writers *the only path* to final beatitude. Astonishing! We have heard that Moosulmans exclude women from the

felicity of the blessed, but this is entirely under the idea of their being without a soul. But if Hindoo women have no souls, what part of them is to enjoy this heaven of bliss with their husbands for thirty-five millions of years? If, in the delicate language of Hareeta, already quoted, "until the wife does not burn (burn) herself in the fire, she cannot get rid of her feminine body," then by that act she does get rid of her body, else, what avails this murderous rite? But if she then "gets rid of her body," what is left of her? A soul, a spirit, of course nothing else. But of what materials is this soul or spirit formed? Do they suppose it to be formed of matter, or to be a part of the Eternal Spirit? If they say it is formed of matter, they degrade their daughters, and sisters, and mothers, beneath the very beasts around them, for there is not a dog that passes by, a reptile that crawls on the earth, or a jackal that howls by night around their cottage, which they do not suppose to be animated by a portion of the Eternal *Brahma*. But if they allow that they have souls, and still cannot obtain final beatitude by burning themselves, then this system, while it devotes their bodies to the most cruel death, dooms their souls to interminable misery. To what absurdity—to what contradiction even of the whole system of Hindooism, have these advocates for burning their mothers and sisters reduced themselves¹ After all their pleading for tenderness to their religious prejudices, it appears evident that this murderous practice is not more contrary to humanity, than it is subversive of their own religious dogmas.

But perhaps these advocates for the burning system will urge, that the fear of the poor widow's mistaking through dulness the way to final beatitude and only reaching heaven, is not the only reason which makes them so desirous of sending her through the flames to enjoy con-

nubred bliss with her deceased husband, that it is rather the first of something worse. This indeed is strongly hinted by the Advocate in his reply to the Opponent on his expressing his hope that were widows after their husband's death disciplined in Sacred Wisdom, they might attain final beatitude. Which by burning themselves with their husbands they can never attain. In this reply, he declares, "that the attempt would be vain, and, as you say (advocate) to discipline them in the Sacred Wisdom, it would be attended with no other success, than to *condemn them for both the one and the other*." But in what way could their being permitted to live and receive instruction condemn them for both the one and the other, or, in other words, cause them to lose every hope of bliss? Their dulness, even in living a life of abstinence and chastity from an improper motive, could only make them fall short of final beatitude, what then should condemn them to the loss of all felicity? The meaning is self-evident: the writer intends to say, that instead of persevering in a life of chastity, they might possibly go astray, and thus incur the condemnation hinted, which indeed nothing but a deviation of this nature could make them incur, since he has already declared, that deeds done from the meanest motive, from "ambition (or concupiscence), anger, or fear," are still available in the case of a woman's burning herself, and hence the merit of a life of self-denial and chastity cannot of course be destroyed by its motives. He evidently means to say, that *if they would not* live a life of chastity, their burning themselves is the only *pretext* of their utter condemnation. And have they then this shocking idea of their own daughters, and sisters, and mothers? Will nothing preserve them in widowhood from a life of lewdness, but then being burnt alive? Then a Suttee at once loses both its name and its nature. It

is no longer the effect of chaste affection, it is the highest dishonour to every family in which it may happen. It proclaims in the loudest manner, that in the opinion of her own relatives, the sister or the mother who is the victim, is so corrupt in her disposition, so impure in her mind, that they have no method of keeping her from a life of unchastity, but that of burning her alive, for what person who had not the heart of a tiger, would resort to this dreadful remedy with so near a relative, while any other course held out the least hope?

But granting all this, still is it right that *this preventive measure* should be adopted with any one, much less with such near relatives? Is it agreeable to natural equity that a person should be burnt alive, not *for* impurity of conduct, but *to prevent it*? If it be, ought it to be confined to one sex? ought it not to be extended to the other likewise, or are the mothers and sisters of those who thus uphold the burning system, more depraved than all who dwell around them? Surely, if this *preventive* course be allowable at all, it ought not to be confined to the most virtuous, merely because they are the most defenceless, it ought to be extended further, to the advocates of the *measure* themselves. If they do not discover an equal disposition to impurity with their mothers and sisters, they may to other vices equally injurious to society, and, according to their own creed, equally punishable in the other world. The same *preventive* therefore might with equal benevolence be exercised on them at stated periods, or at least on such of them as seem most likely to perpetrate vice, and if they were less fond of the burning system than they say the poor widow is, they might be permitted to choose any other mode of dying, and thus the city and the country would, in due time, be purified in the most effectual manner it might, it is true, be some-

the actions of these rude foresters are not approved by men of fidelity, and the laws on the head of Shukra-marina have been regularly maintained by the holy sages, philosophers, and the learned " The plain meaning of this is, that the learned have themselves introduced into Bengal this custom of firmly binding women to the corpse of the deceased husband, heaping wood on them, and pressing them down with large bamboos, from a regard to the custom of the country, when no such custom existed till created by them ' In Bengal there was formerly no custom of this nature existing, and had there been, the customs of the rude and ignorant are here said to be unworthy of regard, it is the learned alone therefore who have introduced this inhuman deviation from their own Shastras, for which they now plead because it does exist '

The manner in which the Advocate justifies their violating the woman's promise to mount the *burning* pile, however, is still more singular. It must here be remarked, that the woman, before she burns, pronounces what is termed the *Sunkulpa*, which is couched in the following terms " *I will mount the BURNING pile* " Adverting to this the Opponent says, " How can the *Sunkulpa* be completed, because (when) it is pronounced with a promise to mount a *burning* pile ? instead of which they mount it before it touches fire " This difficulty the Advocate removes in a moment. Says he, " Whatever you say regarding the incompleteness of the *Sunkulpa*, arises from your inattention, for should a little part of a village or a cloth be consumed by fire, it is then said even by learned men, that the village or the cloth was (is) burnt. In the same manner a little-burning pile is also called a burning pile, and in that case the *Sunkulpa* was (is) not incomplete " As much as to say, that if a single twig be set on fire, this constitutes a burning pile ' In this manner do these men, with the most daring effrontery, sport with

their violating even their own most sacred formulas for the sake of securing the destruction of a poor defenceless widow, in whom nature might otherwise recoil at the doom awaiting her

The next reply, however, is for its levity and falsehood, if possible still more disgusting. The Opponent is made to answer, "I approve of your saying this, but from what instances the people attending funeral ceremonies, (by what authority do the people attending the funeral ceremonies,) tie up the women that are about to mount the burning pile? and why are they not guilty of the sin of slaying women?" To this the Advocate replies, "In the aforesaid text of *Hareeta* it was (is) expressed, that until the women themselves cause their bodies to be wholly consumed in the fire, they cannot finally get rid of their sex. In which case should any part of their bodies while burning asunder in the piles (on the pile) *be slipped out thereof, it cannot be wholly consumed*" It is difficult to say whether the indelicacy, the shocking levity, or the impudent falsehood of this reply be most to be detested. Granting that the horrid rite requires every particle of the body of the wretched victim to be consumed, does their binding her secure this? It secures her *death*, it is true, it renders all the recoilings of nature unavailing, but do they bind down every limb of their helpless victim? and if they did, would not the cords be the first fuel for the flame? For men thus to sport with decency, humanity, and truth, in a defence of murder offered to a British public, is of itself sufficient to condemn for ever the inhuman custom. We shall only detain the reader with one instance more of this kind. The Opponent having expressed his approbation of this reason for binding women, has only one scruple left, which is, whether those who assist in burning the widow are not guilty of sin. To this the Advocate for burning replies, that it rather exalts them to

glory than renders them guilty of sin, which he confirms by reciting the following example from the *Mutsya poo-rana*, "There was a prostitute named Leelavutee, who having resolved to make an offering of an artificial salt-hill, one goldsmith named Heemtura-ghutuka undertook the work, and perceiving it to be a divine action he took nothing from the girl for his hire, but constructed for her a salt-hill with so much elegance and neatness, that afterwards, in reward thereof, the said poor and theological goldsmith together with his wife was endowed with immense riches, and became himself the monarch of the seven-dweepa universe, with a shining form equal to the rays of ten thousand suns" Hence he gives the Opponent to understand, that whoever assists in burning a widow, is likely to reap glory, as well as this theological goldsmith for assisting the prostitute in her devout offering Thus do the supporters of this system, by the most idle fables, as well as the most indecent examples, trifle with the *real* murder of their nearest female relatives

On this subject as the only reason why this murderous custom is still permitted to pollute the land with blood, when the exposure of infants, and men's voluntarily devoting themselves to death, have been abolished by public authority, must be sought in the idea entertained that it is indispensably enjoined by the Hindoo laws and system, we intreat permission to subjoin a few extracts from a document in our possession, drawn up in Sungskṛita about two years ago by Mrityoobjaya-Vidyālakṣṇa, the chief pundit successively in the College of Fort William and in the Supreme Court, at the request of the Chief Judge in the Sudder Dewanee Adawlut, who wished him to ascertain from a comparison of all the works extant on the subject, the precise point of law relative to burning widows, according to those who recommend the practice

This document, as the Compiler of it, from his own extensive learning and the assistance of his friends, had an opportunity of consulting more works on the subject than almost any pundit in this presidency, may be regarded as possessing the highest legal authority according to the Hindoos. After having consulted nearly thirty works on the subject current in Bengal, and the northern, western and southern parts of Hindoost'han, among which are all those quoted for the practice by the author of this pamphlet, he says, "Having examined all these works and weighed their meaning, I thus reply to the questions I have been desired to answer." He then states that Minoo having directed the following formula to be addressed to the bride by the priest at the time of marriage, "Be thou perpetually the companion of thy husband, in life and in death." Harrecta, a later writer, says that it is the inheritance of every woman belonging to the four castes, not being pregnant or not having a little child, to burn herself with her husband. The Compiler afterwards quotes *Tishnoo-moonce* as speaking thus "Let the wife either embrace a life of abstinence and chastity, or mount the burning pile," but he forbids the latter to the unchaste. He then enumerates particularly the various rules laid down by him and others who have followed him on the same side of the question, relative to the time and circumstances in which a woman is permitted to burn herself, and in what cases she is even by them absolutely forbidden. These extracts shew that binding the woman, and the other acts of additional cruelty which the author of this pamphlet justifies, are totally forbidden. The *Soodhee-koumoodee* as quoted by the Compiler says, Let the mother enter the fire after the son has kindled it around his father's corpse, but to the father's corpse and the mother let him not set fire, if the son set fire to the

living mother, he has on him the guilt of murdering both a woman and a mother. Thus the possibility of a woman's being bound to her husband's corpse is taken away while the act is left perfectly optional, the son is not to be in the least degree accessory to the mother's death, if she burn herself at all, it must be by throwing herself into the flames already kindled. And the *Nunyasindhoo* forbids the use of any bandage, bamboos, or wood by way of confining the woman on the funeral pile, nor before she enters it must the least persuasion be used, nor must she be placed on the fire by others. Thus the practice as existing in Bengal and defended in this work, is deliberate murder even according to the legal authorities which recommend burning as optional.

Mrityoonyaya however shews from various authors, that though burning is termed optional, it is still not to be recommended. To this effect he quotes the *Vygyunttee*, "While *Brumhachurya* and burning are perfectly optional, burning may arise from concupiscence, but *Brumhachurya* cannot, hence they are not equally worthy, how then can they be equally optional? By *Brumhachurya* the widow obtains bliss though she have no son." He then quotes several authors as declaring, that women ought not to burn, because it is merely a work of concupiscence, the *Julwa-mala-vilas* and others as declaring, that the practice is merely the effect of cupidity and not the fruit of a virtuous and constant mind, and the *Mitakshura* as declaring, that by embracing a life of abstinence the widow by means of divine wisdom may obtain beatitude, and hence, that a woman's burning herself is improper adding, that in former ages nothing was heard of women's burning themselves, it is found only in this corrupt age.

The following is the conclusion drawn by this able pundit and jurist from the perusal of the whole of these works.

“After perusing many works on this subject, the following are my deliberate and digested ideas Vishnoo-moonee and various others say, that the husband being dead, the wife may either embrace a life of abstinence and chastity, or mount the burning pile, but on viewing the whole, I esteem a life of abstinence and chastity to accord best with the law the preference appears evidently to be on that side Vyasa, Sungkoo, Ungeera, and Hareeta, speaking of a widow's burning, say, that by burning herself with her husband she may obtain connubial bliss in heaven, while by a life of abstinence and chastity, she, attaining sacred wisdom, may certainly obtain final beatitude Hence, to destroy herself for the sake of a little evanescent bliss, cannot be her duty, burning is for none but for those who despising final beatitude, desire nothing beyond a little short-lived pleasure Hence I regard a woman's burning herself as an unworthy act, and a life of abstinence and chastity as highly excellent.—In the Shastras appear many prohibitions of a woman's dying with her husband, but against a life of abstinence and chastity there is no prohibition Against her burning herself the following authorities are found In the Meemangshadurshana it is declared, that every kind of self-inflicted injury is sin The Sankhya says, that a useless death is undoubtedly sinful The killing for sacrifice commanded by the Shastras has a reasonable cause, and is yet sinful in a certain degree, because it destroys life And while by the Meemangsha, either of the two may be chosen; by the Sankhya, a life of abstinence and chastity is also esteemed lawful But by the Vedanta, all works springing from concupiscence, are to be abhorred and forsaken hence a woman's burning herself from the desire of connubial bliss, ought certainly to be rejected with abhorrence ”

He further adds, " No blame whatever is attached to those who prevent a woman's burning. In the *Shastras* it is said, that *Kundurpa* being consumed to ashes by the eye of *Shiva*, his wife *Rutee* determined to burn herself, and commanded her husband's friend *Mudhoo* to prepare the funeral pile. Upon this the gods forbid her, on which account she desisted, but by *Kalee-dasa* no blame is attached to them for this conduct. Thus also in the *Shree-Bhaguvuta* a woman, *Kripee*, had a son, a mighty hero, from love to whom she forbore to burn herself with her husband, yet she was deemed guilty of no sin therein. Now also we hear of sons and other relatives attempting to dissuade a woman from burning, yet they are esteemed guilty of no crime. It is also evident that a woman, in thus burning herself, dies merely from her own self-will, and from no regard to any *shastra*, such the command of a thousand *shastras* would not induce to die. They merely reason thus, ' By the death of my husband I have sustained an irreparable loss, it is better for me to die than to live,' hence a woman determines to die, and her relatives seeing this mind in her, provide the funeral pile, and say, ' if you are determined to die, to die by falling from a precipice would be tedious, die in this manner ' thus a father who has a son determined to go to a distant country, finding all dissuasion vain, at length sends a guide with him who knows all the rivers and the dangerous places. The various *shastras*, therefore, describe this action as being merely that of one who having received an incurable wound, is determined to die whether by falling from a precipice, by fire, or by water "

After this full and accurate investigation by one so able, and possessing such opportunities, the subject as far as relates to the law of the *Hindoos*, or to the countenance it receives from the *Hindoo* system, may well be supposed

to be fully before the public. All that the author of this pamphlet, assisted by all the pundits who wish for the continuance of the practice, has been able to bring forth as at all countenancing it, is confined to the opinions of five or six authors, amidst that multitude included by the Hindoos under the term of "the learned" and after the examination of nearly Thirty works written either for or against this practice, the hope of attaining further light respecting it from the Hindoo Shastras, is totally vain. A work, to be ranked as an authority in point of law, must have been known and read for ages. any work therefore on the subject hitherto hidden, and hereafter brought forth to countenance the practice, becomes for that very reason of no authority. The question is now left to be determined wholly on the principles of equity and reason. It is possible that this practice might have originated in the injunction of Munoo addressed by the priest to the bride in marriage, "Be thou the companion of thy husband in life and in death," although it is evident that Munoo thereby intended nothing of this kind, by his prescribing for widows a life of abstinence and chastity. From this, however, certain succeeding writers, Hareeta, and some others, may have taken occasion to recommend the widow's burning herself, with the hope of living again with her husband for a limited number of years. But even by these it was enjoined, that this should be a perfectly voluntary act, voluntary in its origin, and in every stage of it, and that this should be manifested by her ascending the *burning* pile without the least force, and by no force being used to detain her there. And should nature recoil at the sight of the flames, the atonement was only three kahuns of cowries, or about twelve annas, after which it is expressly enjoined that she shall be received and treated by her neighbours precisely as before. Above

all, the son is forbidden in the most express manner to be in the least degree accessory to his mother's death. If frantic grief urge her to put an end to her own existence, it must be by her throwing herself on the funeral pile of her deceased lord, in which she must be no more assisted than as though she were precipitating herself from a precipice. While nothing can be more murderous, therefore, than the practice and mode justified by the writer of the pamphlet under consideration, nothing can be more contrary to the spirit and intention of even those few Hindoo writers who have recommended the burning system.

While this horrid practice is allowed to have been recommended by certain writers, it is evident that it was never considered as a *law*, or as a religious injunction essential to the duty of a good Hindoo. If it be a law binding even in point of conscience, the greater part of India must ever have lived in a state of direct disobedience to the laws of their own religion, for as the recommendation is directed to widows of every cast down even to the lowest, that of a Chundala, it must have been imperative on all, at least as matter of conscience. Yet, not to advert to what Mrityoonjaya has advanced, that it was unknown in the first and purest ages of Hindooism, if the number of widows burnt in Bengal annually do not exceed a thousand, it must be disobeyed even in Bengal, where it is most prevalent, by at least ninety-nine out of a hundred of the population, and in the western part of Hindoosthan by a still greater proportion, while in the southern part of the British dominions, it is said to be scarcely regarded at all. If this practice therefore form a part of the Hindoo religious system, with the exception of one in perhaps a thousand this system is by themselves universally discarded and treated with contempt.

This barbarous practice however, while recommended by

a few among the Hindoo writers, has been found by others to involve principles directly subversive of Hindooism itself. Here it is almost needless to inform the reader, that the learned among the Hindoos have been for numerous ages almost as much divided respecting their religious sentiments, as were formerly the learned of Greece and Rome. One grand principle of the Hindoo system is, that life must not be destroyed—hence their abstaining from animal food, and hence many have thought it sinful to destroy a noxious or a poisonous reptile. Even sacrifices are supposed to involve a certain degree of guilt, as far as they destroy life, although their being done in obedience to a supposed command, causes the merit of the deed to overbalance its demerit. But it is evident from what has been already urged, that a woman's burning herself has never been considered as a deed *commanded*. Hence, as Mrityoonyaya justly observes, no blame has ever been attached by any of their writers to those who have prevented its being done, which would have been the case had it been regarded as a religious duty. Instances enough may be found in the Hindoo Shastras of the strong sense they have of the sin of obstructing or preventing a religious act, many examples are related of men said to be destroyed by devotees for interrupting them only in their evening ceremonies. While, therefore, it has been merely recommended by a few, others have beheld it as destroying life without cause, and thus violating one of the fundamental principles of Hindooism.

But many have gone farther, and condemned the *very principle* on which it has been recommended. The ground of this has been already mentioned. The Hindoos maintain in all its strictness the doctrine of the metempsychosis, and believe that the human soul is a part of the Supreme Being, and that while its desires are impure and

corrupt, it can never be re-united to him and obtain final beatitude. Others among them, however, hold that certain deeds, though done from the most unworthy motives, are in themselves so available as to merit a certain degree of recompense, never final beatitude indeed, but wealth, a son, long life, the destruction of enemies, or a certain temporary state of bliss in their Swurgas, or heavens. In this class those rank who contend for the burning of widows, as is sufficiently testified by one of the quotations given in the pamphlet under consideration, which says, that though a woman burn herself from "amours, anger, fear, or affection," she is still certain of obtaining heaven. But all these deeds the more learned treat with the greatest contempt, declaring them to be nothing more than vice in another shape, the indulgence of a corrupt mind. These writers, therefore, view a woman's burning herself as perfectly unlawful. Thus, those who form the great support of the Hindoo system, totally condemn the very principle on which the practice is at all recommended, and esteem the whole an indulgence of vicious and corrupt desires, while they insist, on the other hand, that the law *commands* a widow to live a life of abstinence and chastity. That these compose the greater part of the Hindoos, may be inferred from the proportion of widows thus burnt alive when compared with the whole population of Hindoost'han, the horrid practice prevailing chiefly in the lower part of Bengal, and most of all, within about twenty or thirty miles of Calcutta.

Such then is the real state of things relative to this practice, even when described by its most strenuous advocates, for the reader will have seen, that in the pamphlet under consideration, the admissions of the Advocate for its continuance condemn the practice scarcely

less than Mrityoonjaya himself As a *command* it has not the least foundation in the Hindoo system, for while it is *recommended* to all, at least ninety-nine out of a hundred of the strictest and most devout Hindoos, have ever lived in complete disregard of it Had it been otherwise indeed, as the recommendation is general, the country must have been every year a scene of general massacre If the number of Hindoos in India be computed at a hundred millions, and few will estimate them lower, the least number who die annually, must in the common course of mortality be estimated at three millions, and as nearly every man is married, and in general to a woman far younger than himself, a million of widows annually is the very lowest number which we ought to reckon Now, if only one out of a hundred of these are burned, this will exhibit ten thousand widows consigned to the flames every year, but were the whole million to be thus burnt alive, this country would yearly present such a Gehenna—such a sacrifice to Moloch, as the world has never beheld A law, however, regularly disobeyed by ninety-nine out of a hundred of those to whom it is given, and this without either punishment or blame, is totally unworthy the name Such is not the case with the *laws* of the Hindoo system by these, widows are forbidden to marry again,—and not one in a thousand ever marries again As a *recommendation*, then, it has not been supported by one-fifth of the Hindoo writers on ethics or jurisprudence—nor practically regarded by a thousandth part of those who profess Hindooism The recommendation is also in *direct opposition* to the command of the great Hindoo lawgiver, who enjoins on every widow a life of abstinence and chastity, and further, it is grounded on principles completely subversive of the Hindoo system, and opposed to that course which the Hindoos believe to be the only

path to final happiness —Yet this practice, thus opposed to their great legislator's command—to the very nature of their religious system—and to all their best ideas of virtue, is kept alive in the metropolis and its vicinity, by acts of unfeeling coercion, which are the most direct violations of the rules laid down by those few who have at all recommended the practice, while in the provinces of Hindoosthan, which is held to have been the chief seat of every important transaction detailed in their mythology, and which contains a brave, noble, courageous race, before whom the natives of Bengal have always trembled, the practice, if formerly prevalent in any great degree, has at this time nearly expired beneath the feelings of common humanity. Yet all these circumstances of additional cruelty are now detailed and justified in an address to the British public, while not the least shadow of argument is brought forward in support of the system, but rather principles are tacitly avowed as the grand motive for continuing it, which discover the most complete absence of feeling for the moral welfare of their dearest female relatives, and reflect on their characters the highest dishonour.

While the discussion of the subject was confined to the native language, a certain degree of silence might perhaps have been less blameable. But after a justification of the system has appeared in the shape of an appeal to the public both in India and in Britain, in the English language, it would be criminal to remain silent, and a grievous offence against humanity to treat the subject in a light and cursory manner. This must form our apology for having devoted to this article so unusual a portion of room, as well as for the delay in sending forth the Number in which it is contained. And when it is considered, that this practice causes the death of a greater number of persons in one year, who, *if they ought not to*

be thus burnt alive, involve the country in all the guilt of innocent blood, than are publicly executed for their crimes throughout the whole of India in the course of twenty years, it cannot be wrong to call, to this momentous subject, the attention of every friend to his country. How would Britain feel, if within herself a hundred innocent persons suffered death by some mistake of law in the course of a year? How then ought she to feel when, in only one province of her foreign dominions, nearly a thousand innocent widows are every year burnt to death? Were this inhuman persecution, which in the number of its annual victims exceeds all that papal superstition ever brought to the stake in Britain in the course of a century, directed by the supporters of this practice against any particular *sect*, or class of men, they would long ago have appealed to their rulers for redress—or they would have left the spot where they were treated with such cruelty. But how can mothers and sisters make an appeal against their own relatives? How can a wife, a mother, withdraw from her own family? They may endure continual agony under the apprehension of the dreadful doom which they know awaits them on the first fatal attack of disease on their husbands,—they may feel their anguish renewed at the sight of every female neighbour they behold led forth to the flames—they may tremble at every touch of disease which affects their husbands, and weep at every recollection of their hapless children,—but can they leave the scene of suffering? can they make *known* their sorrows? dare they bewray even in the slightest degree the anguish which preys on their vitals? They lie bound as sheep for the slaughter,—and thus they must remain, suffering in silence, till *British feeling and sympathy shall duly realize* their hitherto unknown, unpitied misery ———

While we thus feel on this subject, however, we hail with joy that diffusion of light among the natives, which has constrained this defence of cruelty and murder to come forth before the public. Than this circumstance nothing can be more auspicious to the best interests of India. Let examination thus begin among the natives themselves, let every part of the Hindoo system, and every practice it is supposed to countenance, be thus brought to the test of reason. From this course truth has nothing to fear, and why should those practices which are contrary to humanity and righteousness, continue to scatter misery through a country enriched with the choicest blessings of Providence, and formed to be the garden of India? We are happy to find that Ram-mohana-ray, on whose late excellent pamphlet so humanely addressed to his own countrymen on this subject, this is intended as a most fierce attack, has prepared an answer thereto in his own language, with a view to its being circulated among such of his countrymen as still feel unwilling to give up this horrid custom. With an English translation of his reply to this pamphlet we trust he will soon favour the British public.

IV

ON FEMALE IMMOLATION *

IN the construction of human society, we perceive a plan of the highest wisdom and benevolence displayed in uniting the various ranks of men by their mutual dependence on each other. The same principles regulate the supply both of our natural and our social wants. That which one country fails to produce is abundantly raised in another, and thus a bond of union is created between different and distant nations. Had every country been furnished with an ample supply of all the productions requisite for its subsistence and comfort, the chain of reciprocal accommodation, with its invaluable relations, would have been broken. The same rule applies equally to our social deficiencies. To have removed every moral and political evil, would have been easy for the Great Parent of mankind, but he has condescended to share with his creatures the ineffable pleasure of doing good by placing the weak by the side of the powerful—by bringing the ignorant into contact with those who possess knowledge, and the poor under the view of those who are rich. In tracing the ramifications of this system, we behold not only a remedy for the inseparable evils of humanity, but a foundation for the happiest attachment of one being to another, through the exercise of charity and benevolence. Thus none of the gifts of the Almighty are bestowed in

vain , and it is only through a departure from the fundamental principles of society, that misery still continues to reign among men.

Wherever then there exists a power of doing good, there results thence a duty for exercising it Divine Providence has in no instance bestowed power, or influence, or any other blessing, without a direct intention that it should be employed in supplying some deficiency. To those who controvert this doctrine, and maintain that power is granted, not for the benefit of those who are subject to it, but for the gratification of the holder, we would say, that if power which is as essentially a divine gift as any of the productions of the earth, be created without any view to public utility, then the food we eat and the raiment we wear have been granted with the same absence of beneficial design, and every use we have made of them has been unnatural and presumptuous But this is a monstrous supposition, repugnant to reason, and opposed equally to the constant practice of civilized nations, and the general voice of mankind In what well regulated kingdom is power delegated either to the superior or inferior officers of justice for their personal gratification ?

What has been the general opinion of mankind on this subject, history will abundantly inform us Among the great and mighty conquerors whose deeds appear on record, have not succeeding ages invariably cherished the memory of those who have improved their power and influence for the good of society, and loaded with obloquy the memory of those who have acted differently ? In the history of Alexander the mind is less gratified in recounting the various nations he subdued, than in dwelling on the beneficent employment of his power in promoting the interests of society, and affording facilities for trade and commerce. The conquests of the Romans would have

been almost as uninteresting as those of Jenghis-khan or any other barbarian, had not that high-minded people carried into the conquered countries the arts of civilization and refinement, and rendered victory subservient to the improvement of the nations dependent on them. Milton in his history of England says, "with the Roman Empire fell also what was in this western world chiefly Roman, learning, valour, eloquence, history, civility, and even language itself, all these together as it were with equal pace diminishing and decaying." In the Spanish conquest of America we perceive a reverse of this picture, a civilized and Christian nation, neglecting the finest opportunities of doing good,—trampling on the natives of the country, aggravating every natural barbarity, and so far from elevating the inhabitants in intellect, knowledge, and virtue, placing them in a far more degraded situation than as though a Spaniard had never landed on their shores. And has not every historian described these conquests as the foulest blot on the European character since it began to emerge from barbarism, and held them up to the indignation of mankind? What has been the conduct of the British nation, blessed as it has been with pre-eminent power and influence, and what the general opinion on the subject? To instance only in one act,—that of the abolition of the slave-trade. Did any man consider us in this act of justice as stepping beyond the line of policy and duty, and when we used our influence to procure its abolition from other nations, was there one individual who regarded the measure as an unwarrantable employment of our power? We are sure there is not a British heart, which does not glow with animation at the recollection of those glorious struggles, and wish that if our nation should return to its former insignificance and the record of our actions perish, some memorial of this

splendid act of humanity might outlive the wreck of our fame. The general opinion of mankind has invariably ranged itself on the side of a virtuous employment of power, and loaded with reproach the memory of those who have imparted no benefit to the nations from whose subjugation they have derived fame, wealth, and dominion. When the exultations of victory cease and the recollections of conquest fade, these triumphs of humanity remain in undecaying remembrance, attracting, as they pass down the stream of time, fresh admiration and gratitude from the successive generations of mankind. And is not this a wise dispensation of Providence? Is it not for the benefit of mankind that warriors should carry with them the idea, that it is not from their martial achievements, but from the use they make of their power, that they can expect solid renown? Is it not beneficial for them to be reminded, as often as they review the page of History, that when the sword of conquest is sheathed, their duties have only commenced, and that their obligations to benefit mankind increase with the opportunities they enjoy?

These ideas will not be weakened on reviewing the events of the last sixty years in the Eastern hemisphere, in noticing the sudden and almost miraculous extinction of an oppressive system of power, and the rapid elevation of a tribe of distant islanders to the throne of the great Mogul. When we survey the leading features of these two governments, and compare the insecurity and oppression of the one, with the tranquillity, and happiness diffused throughout India under the other, we can be at no loss to account for the exchange of political ascendancy which has taken place. That the British Government has in a great degree fulfilled the high trust committed to it by the Almighty Disposer of events, by endeavouring to

render its subjects happy, is unquestionable ;—and it is equally unquestionable that while misery continues to exist, the energies of benevolence can never be consistently relaxed. It is therefore a legitimate object of enquiry, whether there do not yet remain evils to be eradicated from India. The infelicity of its inhabitants arises not from an ungenerous soil, but from an unnatural system of morals, and from rites and customs, which though deemed sacred, are inimical to human happiness. Of these observances, some are confined to religion, and, however absurd, must be left to the gradual effect of persuasion, but there are others of a more malignant character, there are customs now existing among the Hindoos which if exhibited in any other country, would subject the perpetrators to the punishment of the secular arm, among which the burning of widows on the funeral pile stands foremost. The frequent examination of this practice in the former Numbers of this work, may seem to demand an apology for its introduction again, but it is a question of such importance to the honour of our country, and to the happiness of the most amiable portion of the native community, that we feel confident this renewed examination of it will not be deemed superfluous. The question is not one which can be permitted to slumber, it ought, on the contrary, to undergo the most rigid scrutiny in all its bearings, since it is only from repeated examination that its abolition can be ultimately expected. It must yield in time to the voice of humanity,—we cannot persuade ourselves that these unnatural immolations will be permitted to exist for another quarter of a century, we cannot for a moment permit the idea, that there are *twenty-five thousand* innocent and helpless females yet destined to the flames under a Christian and a British government.

In the course of this enquiry, we shall consider female immolation as a practice cognizable by the civil power, though sheltered beneath the mantle of religion. The injury committed in all these instances is such as legislators have always considered as subject to the relief which it is the province of civil power to grant. This is not the case with numerous rites of the Hindoo religion, which, however detrimental to individual happiness and unfavourable to the interests of society, as they concern religious prejudice alone, and infringe not on those fundamental principles which hold society together, cannot be prohibited consistently with the principles of toleration. But no one will contend, that the burning of widows, in which an innocent life is deliberately taken away, is merely a case of this nature. The supreme authority would not destroy the life of any of these females without a regular trial, and a view to the general benefit of society, can it then come within the province of a few private individuals to sacrifice a life which the civil power ventures not to touch? If the widow destroys herself voluntarily, she is guilty of an act which our laws have declared infamous by branding the memory of the self-murderer. And does not the spirit of this practice declare that self-murder ought to be prevented where the intention is previously known? But if the act of immolation be not self-murder, it must be an act of murder on the part of all those who assist in it. The moment a purely religious rite infringes on the laws of society, its character is changed, and it is transformed into a civil crime. On this subject we beg leave to quote the opinion of Locke, in his Letter on Toleration, in which he defines clearly the religious observances with which the civil magistrate can, and cannot interfere. "The magistrate ought not to forbid the preaching or professing of any speculative opinions in any

church, because they have no manner of relation to the civil rights of the subject"—“For it does not belong unto the magistrate to make use of his sword in punishing every thing indifferently which he takes to be a sin against God Covetousness, uncharitableness, idleness, and many other things, are sins by the consent of all men, which yet no man ever said were to be punished by the magistrate The reason is, because they are not prejudicial to other men’s rights, nor do they break the public peace of societies”—“The post of a magistrate is only to take care that the commonwealth receive no prejudice, and that there be no injury done to any man in life and estate”—“You will say,—if some congregations have a mind to sacrifice infants, or practise any other such heinous enormities, is the magistrate obliged to tolerate them because they are committed in a religious assembly? I answer, No These things are not lawful in the ordinary course of life, nor in any private house, and therefore neither are they so in the worship of God”—*Locke’s Works, vol. II pp 368, 370*

If it be advanced that the *Hindoos* think this a religious rite, we would ask, under what government is the privilege of deciding on the nature of crimes delegated to the offender? If the Hindoo who burns his innocent mother, can bring himself to think it a religious action, are the civil authorities to whom the preservation of her life is committed, over which life he has not even the shadow of a right, obliged to think so? Are the sacred principles of justice to be abrogated because private individuals are mistaken in their notion of the worship which is acceptable to the Deity? The admission of this principle would rend asunder the bonds of society, for if the highest crime, that of murder, may go unpunished when committed under a religious pretext, what crime can we con-

sistently punish in India? What crime is there which the Hindoo code does not sanction under some shape or other?

“ But the Hindoo law commands this murderous practice.” This we must beg leave to deny, Munoo, the parent of Indian jurisprudence, for whom the natives entertain such veneration that the Brahmun who possesses not a shalgram and a copy of his laws, is said to have forfeited his religious privileges, Munoo, respecting whom it is acknowledged that what is contrary to his injunctions, is not law, says nothing of female immolation, but on the contrary prescribes rules for the conduct of widows during the term of their natural existence. Let her emaciate her body by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots, and fruit, but let her not, when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man. *Let her continue till death* forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue, which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one husband.” *Sir W Jones’s Translation of Munoo, p. 143* If succeeding commentators have partially countenanced it, we would ask, since what period have we taken those excellent authors for our rule and guide, and substituted their precepts instead of the principles of justice? For the honour of the British character we can reply, that we have never done so,—we have not put to death every shoodra who has molested a brahmun by bringing against him an action for debt, robbery, or adultery,—we have not cut off the hands of every shoodra who has seized a brahmun by the neck,—we have not poured melted lead into the ears of every plebeian who has listened during the last sixty years to reproaches against these twice-born favourites of heaven. Yet these injunctions, however contrary to reason, to humanity, and to the peace of mankind, are positively contained in their code. We have not therefore

listened for one moment to these books, but have defended the natives from the bloody rigour of their own laws. If any one be still disposed to object, that we have in general upheld the authority of these books, while we have disannulled those laws which appeared unjust, we really know not what argument can be adduced more favourable to the abolition of female murder, for if we possess a discretionary power over the Hindoo laws, the helpless widow has as strong a claim on our compassion, as the members of the servile tribe, almost every individual of which is daily incurring the penalties decreed in them; and if we make any exceptions in the execution of the Hindoo code, the unprotected female ought fully to share in them.

Another question naturally arises out of the subject, if religious prejudices may be received as a sufficient authority for violating the sanctions of morality, may not the leader of a new sect spring up, and, under a religious pretext, command his followers to murder all their female relatives and embrace an ascetic life? If this were prohibited, would it not be on the plea, that though circumstances may render it politic to wink at evils of long standing, they could not be allowed to spring up *de novo*? We thus arrive at another, and by far the most important division of the subject, namely its *expediency*. We are confident that the continuance of the practice stands on the doctrine of expediency alone. This is its only prop, of which could it once be deprived, it would fall beneath the weight of justice and humanity. And considering the British supremacy in the East as the greatest blessing which the natives enjoy, it does become a duty to look forward to the remote consequences, which may attend any act of benevolence. The government of this country has done much to alleviate the misery of India, and to counteract the mischief of its native depravity, and were

it practicable with one stroke of the pen to remove every misery and to diffuse happiness through the country, we are sure it would not be withheld for a moment. It cannot therefore be improper to weigh the question of expediency, and to collect into one focus all the light which can be obtained on the subject from our preceding transactions in India. And if it should thence appear that we have not hitherto been arrested in our career of justice by the prejudices of the natives, that on the contrary the Hindoos have always gone hand in hand with us, without discovering any hostility to our authority, there can be no reason to apprehend that in the abolition of female immolation, we shall experience the least interruption. To prove that this is the case we will adduce three examples.

I. In the province of Guzerat the deluded parents had been for a long series of years in the habit of destroying their female infants as soon as they were born. Whether the custom was sanctioned by the shastras or not, is irrelevant, it is enough that it was deeply rooted in the practice and prejudices of the natives. These unnatural murders at length attracted the notice of Government, and they were publicly prohibited by an order from the supreme power. Did Government immediately lose the confidence and attachment of the natives? Did the enraged parent, unsheathing his sword, slaughter the rescued victim, and then turn it on those who had attempted its preservation? Not one symptom of disaffection has been manifested by the natives on this account. By many the practice is probably forgotten, and it would now appear in their eyes as horrible as it formerly appeared natural and indispensable. The infants have been suffered to grow up to maturity, and to engage the affections of their parents, and who will say that the father breathes desolation and slaughter against those who formerly saved them from destruction?

II Our second example is of the same nature, but, inasmuch as it indicates the feelings of a class of natives at the other extremity of the continent, it may in the opinion of some carry greater weight, as demonstrating that the same security accompanies every assertion of the principles of humanity throughout this vast empire. From time immemorial it was the custom for mothers to sacrifice their children to the Ganges at the annual festival held at Gunga Saugor. The British Government regarded the practice with those feelings of horror which such unnatural murders are calculated to inspire, and as persuasion would have been unavailing with those who had parted with every parental feeling, the practice was prohibited by a public decree, and the prohibition enforced by public authority. Let us not forget that this order was promulgated in the presence of thousands assembled at a public festival, in the highest excitement of superstitious frenzy. What was the consequence? not one instance of resistance was attempted by that immense crowd. The mischief vanished from the earth, and no one bewailed it. The mothers who had brought their children to this funeral sacrifice, were constrained to carry them back unhurt, and many perhaps to whom the heinousness of the crime had never yet appeared, were by this interposition awakened to a sense of its enormity. Did those women in whose minds we had rekindled the flame of maternal feeling, fill every village on their return with wailing and lamentation? Did one of the fathers of those devoted children, on their unexpected restoration, give vent to his indignation, and draw down curses on our merciful interference? We believe there was no one father or mother at that period who did not, on cool reflection, call down blessings on those who, when they themselves were dead to humanity, had interposed so judiciously with

the arm of the civil power. But even supposing that there might have been some monster in human shape, who, so far from rejoicing at the return of his own offspring, imprecated the divine vengeance on our heads, who, as the faculties of the child expanded, felt his indignation progressively augmented against those who had prevented its premature destruction, should we have acted consistently had we taken his murderous inclinations as the gage of our conduct?

III. The third example will, perhaps, go still farther to shew that we have pursued a course of undeviating justice in India, at the expence of religious injunction and popular prejudice. The brahmuns, as our readers well know, are esteemed sacred throughout India, the tribe is surrounded with the loftiest prerogatives. "As the first-born of created beings they have a right by their primogeniture and eminence of birth to whatever exists in the world. The birth of a brahmun is a constant incarnation of *Dhurma*, the god of justice, through the benevolence of the brahmun other mortals enjoy life."* Hence the Hindoo laws absolutely prohibit the execution of a brahmun. they forbid the magistrate even to imagine evil against him. Thus fenced by the laws, and extolled by their sacred books, they are still more powerfully guarded by the respect and veneration of the people. From one corner of India to the other, however religious observances may have fallen into disuse, this sacred tribe enjoys undiminished homage. When, therefore, our Government commenced in the East, we were reduced to the most serious dilemma. to have inflicted punishment on brahmuns, would have been to violate the most awful sanctions of Hindoo law, and the dearest prejudices of the people;

* See Munoo, as before quoted

to have exempted them from punishment would have been to deliver over the country to desolation, ravage, and murder. The reign of equity, which we were about to introduce, was stopped at the very threshold, the destiny of millions hung in suspense. How did we act on this occasion? Did we lay the laws of justice at the feet of this sacred tribe? Did we abrogate our code of jurisprudence, and adopt the vedas for our guides? Did we deprive the country of our protection, because the Hindoo shastras forbid the punishment of the aggressors if they happened to be brahmuns? We did not hesitate a single moment, but boldly stepped forward in vindication of the rights of society, and in spite of a formidable phalanx of Hindoo jurisconsults, and of the strongest prejudices, caused these delinquents to pay the forfeit of their lives to the laws of offended justice. In the mode of doing this we admitted no recognition of their pre-eminent birth. We tried them publicly like other criminals, and subjected them to the degradation of a gibbet. We have repeated the punishment of brahmuns since that period whenever it has been requisite, and scarcely a year has since elapsed without the execution of a brahmun in some one of the provinces of our empire. Have the natives complained of this outrage on the sanctity of their priesthood, or considered it as an infringement of our toleration? Have we lost their confidence? Have they in any one instance petitioned us to disregard their welfare, and exempt their spiritual guides from death?—or have they not, on the contrary, tacitly sanctioned every act of punishment, and applauded the inflexible tenor of our proceedings? Let any man read the account of Nunda-koomara's execution in Calcutta forty years ago, and he will be convinced that Hindoos are not the men to complain of the execution of justice, even though it happen to infringe their laws and preju-

dices If there was any one act of Mr Hastings's government distinguished for bold decision, it was the execution of this man Our Indian empire was then in its infancy, small in extent, unconsolidated, surrounded with restless enemies, who ruled three-fourths of the continent, yet under all these disadvantages, when the law had pronounced him guilty, Mr Hastings did not restrain the execution of the sentence Let us not forget that this punishment was inflicted in the rising metropolis of a new power, in the midst of two hundred thousand of his own countrymen, and at a period when it was of the first importance to conciliate our new subjects Mr Hastings judged that there could be no danger, and his judgment proved correct If ever it might have been expected that public feeling would have manifested itself against us, it was most assuredly in this instance, when for the first time we were carrying the law into execution against one of this sacred tribe,—where the actors in this unprecedented exhibition of justice, were but a handful compared with the immense crowd which surrounded the scaffold That vast crowd returned peaceably to their houses We are erecting a monument to Mr Hastings's memory, in the country where he founded a new empire; but the true glory of the dead consists in the example they leave us, and we are most faithful to their renown when we are most anxious to copy their virtues And if Mr. Hastings's intrepid support of the claims of justice in the face of such formidable obstacles, should continue to encourage others, and thereby prove a lasting benefit to the natives of India, more solid glory will encircle his memory, than as though we covered the plains of India with obelisks

Some have attributed the execution of Nunda-koomara to motives incompatible with equity our business, however, is only with the intrepidity of the act Supposing

this to have been the case, and even to the extent urged by the bitterest enemies of Mr Hastings, the example will still more fully bear on the subject under review. If the natives submitted without a single murmur to the unjust execution of a man of the highest cast, and possessed of such wealth and influence, is there any reason to apprehend disquietude when we rescue female innocence from the flames?

These three examples will, we trust, shew that whenever we have found it necessary, at the call of justice, to violate the precepts of the Hindoo law or the prejudices of the people, we have done it with perfect safety, that the natives have in no instance either complained of our conduct, or exhibited the least symptom of discontent. In the last instance we have indisputably departed farther from the spirit of Hindooism than we can do by any future prohibition of those rites which still disgrace India. We have opened the way for the progressive amelioration of its inhabitants, by violating the sanctity of this sacred tribe at the command of reason. This case bears so powerfully on the safety of prohibiting female immolations, that we must beg permission to pursue the analogy a little farther. The inviolability of the priesthood is one of the fundamental principles of the Hindoo law, the burning of widows is not,—it is a mere excrescence from the putrid soil of polytheism. The integrity of Hindoo jurisprudence was lost the moment the first brahmun was executed, Hindooism is not in the least violated by preventing female sacrifices, since the highest legal authority is in favour of a life of widowhood and abstinence, and succeeding commentators have left the question in a state of ambiguity. Brahmuns are universally esteemed and venerated, every native has bent the knee before a spiritual guide, and received his benedic-

tion, and is therefore deeply interested in preserving the honour of his earthly divinity. But with respect to the burning of widows, we question whether one-half of the population of India know any thing of it but by report. The number of those who feel interested in supporting it, consists only of those who are personally engaged in promoting female immolation—the great and overwhelming majority of our native subjects are as little interested in the question, as in the death of a brahmin at Cape Comorin. The execution of brahmuns is still matter of grief even to those who acknowledge the justice of the sentence, and while Hindooism retains a single votary, it must be so, it is natural for men to feel regret when they behold the objects of their highest veneration led out to execution. But will any man regret the discontinuance of female immolation? will any individual, when he sees the young and healthful mother engaged in the tender care of her offspring, regret that she was not consumed with her husband on the funeral pile? This being the state of the case with regard to the execution of brahmuns and the burning of widows, it does not require any great penetration to discern, that those who have quietly submitted to the death of their priests when justice has demanded the sacrifice, will manifest no disquietude when, in the spirit of equity and humanity, we prevent the murder of their sisters and daughters. A preventive measure is, in all countries, less obnoxious than an aggressive one.

Were the abolition the *first* infringement of the prejudices of the people, some cause for apprehension might possibly arise. But we have during forty years given the natives a practical exposition of the principles on which our Indian government is founded, and there is no more expectation among the body of the people that any antiquated law or reigning prejudice will now stand in the

way of equity and justice, than there is in the breast of any single individual that the current of his private wishes will regulate the decision of a judge in any cause in which he may be a party. The question, therefore, is not whether we shall for the first time infringe popular prejudice, and maintain the sovereignty of justice, but whether, having commenced this course, we shall proceed forward and liberate the country from a practice which fills it with innocent blood. Let us never for a moment admit the idea that the natives will regard it as indicating a wish to restrain the exercise of their faith by coercion. They do not so judge of us when their spiritual guides are led forth to execution. Had this groundless anticipation arisen in their minds on the first establishment of our inflexible code, we have since so acted as fully to inspire them with confidence. We have protected them in the exercise of their religion, we have permitted hundreds of temples to rise without enquiry, we have allowed them to squander millions of rupees annually to propitiate their gods. During the whole of our administration we have not violated one sanctuary, or mutilated one idol. Is it to be supposed, then, that while they continue to enjoy these, to them unprecedented privileges, they will consider us as having abandoned the principles of toleration, when we prohibit the inhuman slaughter of defenceless women, and abrogate a practice, discountenanced by half the ~~shasters~~ *shasters*, and condemned by the great body of the people?

depart from the spirit of the Hindoo religion, and if they did formerly consider it binding, and have since permitted it to drop into disuse, there can be no mischief in our discountenancing it elsewhere. We pass over these considerations, and beg to call the attention of the reader to this simple fact, that the natives of Bengal are under higher obligations to the British Government than those of any other province in India, that they have had greater opportunities of appreciating the value of our protection, inasmuch as they have enjoyed it for a longer period of time. For sixty years they have not seen the smoke of an enemy's camp, they have known nothing of war, but from the quiet review of our troops. Will history point out to us any preceding period of equal duration when the country enjoyed such uninterrupted peace and tranquillity? This circumstance undoubtedly gives us a right to expect that when we call on them to discontinue a practice revolting to humanity, the call will be obeyed without hesitation. How glorious to use the advantages we have acquired, and the confidence we have so richly earned, in fresh attempts to promote their happiness! The Mussulmans, who never protected the unhappy natives from foreign invasion, or from internal commotion, checked this practice in many cases, and in some provinces abolished it altogether. Will it be too much for us, while we dispense blessings with one hand, with the other to snatch the helpless victim from the flames? There is no instance on historic record in which acts of humanity have ever roused public indignation. Massacre, confiscation, and injustice, are the elements from which revolutions spring, not humanity, justice, and equity.

Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that the natives are so dead to every noble feeling as to foster hostility to us on the suppression of this practice,—the prin-

ciples of self-preservation would quickly recall them to reason. *The British Government are the only defenders of Bengal from anarchy and plunder.* Its peaceful inhabitants have never been able to resist their more powerful neighbours of Hindoost'han, and were our protection withdrawn from it for a single year, its fertile plains would be desolated, its inhabitants massacred, and the immense wealth accumulated under our government torn from it with unsparing rapacity. This is an argument which comes home to the feelings of every bosom, and in this case would be all-powerful. The remembrance of the successive Maliratta invasions of Bengal, is still transmitted from father to son, and though the ravages which were committed have lost much of their atrocity by the lapse of time, the natives still shrink with instinctive terror from the prospect of similar invasions, in which, on one occasion, thirty females, to escape violation and death, left their native village and destroyed themselves in a neighbouring stream, on beholding the distant approach of the hostile cavalry. But we need not the aid of threatened vengeance to substantiate the abolition, the fears we entertain, if any are entertained, are entirely of our own creation. With what feelings of astonishment would a native receive the first intimation, that we apprehended public disquietude from such a measure! After having overcome his natural disbelief in the possibility of such a supposition, what a complete change must take place in his ideas before he could compress the gigantic power of the British nation into a shape to be affected by a handful of his unwarlike countrymen.

Let us then freely look at the practicability of its abolition, and number both its friends and its foes. We may calculate on the support of all the humane, the wise, and the good throughout India. We may depend on that

great majority of the people who have prevented *every* village in India from being lighted up monthly with these infernal fires. Those who have used all their power and influence to liberate their country from the stigma of this guilt by preventing their own mothers and sisters from ascending the funeral pile, will undoubtedly support us in discountenancing the practice elsewhere. We shall enlist on our side all those tender feelings, which, though now dormant, will then be aroused into new life and vigour. But above all, we shall surround ourselves with the protection of that Almighty Power, whose command is, "Thou shalt do no murder," who defends the weak and succours the injured, who, when the cries of oppressed India had pierced his throne, selected us of all other nations to break its chains, and restore it to happiness. With all these advantages in our favour, we may surely despise the wailings of those, who, despicable in numbers, have rendered themselves still more despicable by their inhumanity, to whom the shrieks of a mother or a sister writhing in the flames are as the sweetest music, who have parted with all that distinguishes men from demons, and retain nothing of our nature but its outward form.

V

ON THE AGRICULTURE OF INDIA.*

THERE are few things in their own nature so congenial with the human mind as our interesting ourselves in the happiness of others. Hitherto, indeed, this has been exemplified in human life but in a small degree. In every age the children of renown have been those who have been inimical to the happiness of mankind so completely, though imperceptibly, has their enemy blinded men, that honour and estimation have been almost exclusively awarded to those who have been its greatest destroyers, and those instances in which happiness has been sought in other pursuits, have often involved a complete disregard of the welfare of all besides. That while pursuing happiness in ways so opposite to the great law of our nature, "thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*," men should so frequently become a prey to the most poignant misery, can furnish little cause of surprise. It is only in seeking the happiness of others that a mind rightly informed can taste the least degree of solid enjoyment.

While the general law of our nature, however, creates every man our neighbour to whom we have opportunity of doing good, certain circumstances seem to lay us under peculiar obligations to consult the welfare of others

Misery itself often constitutes this claim, particularly when the power of removing it is evidently confided to us. Hence the amazing extent and force of that declaration, "To him that knoweth to do good and doth it not, to him it is sin." But when to this is added a tacit dependance on us, or at least such a concurrence of circumstances as enables us to impart benefits to an individual or a nation which none beside can impart, the obligation is increased almost to the highest possible degree. It is this which adds such a weight to parental duty. We are not called upon to seek the welfare of our own offspring from their being more deserving than others, and still less from an idea that they are more the favourites of heaven than those of the most abject or ignorant, but the connection in which we stand to them is such, that, were we not to secure their welfare by training them up in the paths of virtue and happiness, no one else could discharge this duty. If robbed by our neglect of their natural guardians, they must be delivered over to misery and ruin, because others, if they possessed the affection, would still be without the opportunities which the discharge of parental duty requires.

Such is in a great degree the nature of the connection subsisting between Britain and India. Britain possesses the means of improvement and instruction beyond most other nations in Europe. India, on the contrary, is ignorant and wretched, while a bounteous Providence is pouring forth upon her almost every blessing which can render a country happy. But it is to Britain alone that she can look for instruction and relief. Did other nations possess the means of imparting them in the fullest manner, the opportunity is denied them. How could any other nation interfere so as to gain the confidence of India? It is to Britain alone that Providence has committed this pleasing

task, and in a more full and ample manner than has ever been done to any nation at any former period

Hence arises the peculiar obligation under which Britain lies to seek the welfare of India in every possible way. This obligation by no means rests on the superior capacity of our Indian fellow-subjects, and still less on their superior moral worth. Were these alone regarded indeed, benevolence itself might almost turn away in despair, few countries have ever presented more of a repulsive aspect, both as to morals and the exercise of the understanding, the absence of almost every virtue that can adorn life, and of every effort to remove the natural evils of life, was perhaps never more evident in any country. But these circumstances, so far from discouraging the mind, ought to urge it on to greater exertion. What parent ceases to seek a child's welfare because he is wayward and perverse, or even immoral? And is it not to this parental perseverance that thousands are indebted for blessings never sought or valued by themselves, which, however, have constituted their happiness through life, and who but for this perseverance would have been wholly lost to society?

This may suggest to us the proper line of conduct amidst the difficulties we may experience in attempting to promote the welfare of our Indian fellow-subjects, from their perverseness, or their ingratitude. The mind even of a child must be first awakened to the value of the benefits intended him, before its finer feelings can be brought into full operation, and many an instance may be adduced of the most grateful sense being retained through life of benefits received with insensibility and perhaps with dislike, at the time they were imparted, although that was the only period in which they could have been communicated with any effect. Both reason

and analogy may therefore convince us, that the efficiency of an attempt to communicate benefits to our Indian fellow-subjects is not to be estimated by the earnestness with which these may be sought by them, or even the readiness with which they may be received after the fullest explanation of their nature and value. It rather becomes us to examine their circumstances, and to consider with parental solicitude in what way their present miseries can be removed or mitigated, and their future welfare and happiness be secured.

To do this, an ample degree of penetration is by no means necessary, the most cursory survey of their circumstances will be sufficient to discover, that while nature pours forth her bounties on them almost without exertion on their part, the ignorance, vice, oppression, and abjectness of mind in which they have been sunk for so many generations, have annihilated the happiness they might be expected to enjoy, and reduced them to a state of poverty and misery, which to an enlightened European would be perfectly insupportable.

Nor is it to their religion alone that the sources of their misery are to be immediately traced. That, like a poisoned fountain, has diffused disease and death through every walk of life, but injustice and oppression on the one hand, and improbity, indolence, and abjectness of mind on the other, have unnerved every exertion, particularly in Agriculture, and rendered that pursuit which might have been a healthful stream, diffusing plenty and affluence in every direction, a stagnant marsh sending forth its pestilential vapours on every side. The Agricultural classes in India, with scarcely a single instance of an overgrown farmer's ruining his neighbours by engrossing their little farms, are sunk into a state of penury and wretchedness of which the same classes in Britain can scarcely form an idea.

improved in Britain, that in many instances double the quantity of produce is now obtained from the same spot of ground, the interests of the husbandman have been more fully regarded, and in numerous instances estates have since been doubled or tripled in their value. Without these improvements in agriculture, indeed, as well as those in manufactures, it is not easy to say how Britain could have carried on for so many years a war against the united force of almost all Europe, nor how she could since have supported that immense load of debt which this tremendous contest has entailed upon her. We may safely say with Sir John Sinclair himself, that "it has materially contributed to preserve the nation from the horrors of famine, and been the means of rapidly increasing its agricultural industry and treasures."

Improvements in agriculture, however, unlike those in certain manufactures, "can create no rivalry," the agricultural prosperity of one nation can do no injury to another, and in times of scarcity, from which the most fertile countries cannot be always exempted, it may be of the utmost service. This being the fact, what can be more reasonable than that Britain should impart something of her agricultural science, in which she confessedly stands first among the nations, to India, whose prosperity is identified with her own, and who is so evidently confided to her guardian care by an all-wise Providence?

The propriety of thus attempting to promote the agricultural interests of India must at once strike the mind, from a view of the state in which India was previously to her being placed under the care of Britain, and of the importance of her agriculture both to herself and to surrounding nations. Its state previously to her connection with Britain, and indeed up to the present time, may be easily inferred from circumstances. If the agriculture of

Britain, who had for centuries enjoyed the blessings of liberty and of Christianity, was at the end of the last, in such a state, as to admit of improvement capable in many instances of doubling the produce of her soil, in what a state must that of India be, where the rays of liberty have never shone, where for continued ages no man was certain of reaping what he might sow, —where the farmer never knew what he should have to pay for the land he occupied, a fine crop invariably awakening the rapacity of his landlord, —and where his own interest therefore seemed at war with every thing like improvement, since to bestow due labour on his field was the sure way to a state of deeper poverty and distress. When to this system, which invariably reigned even in times of the profoundest peace, we add the numerous wars with which the great and the petty competitors for power have alike desolated whole provinces for these last two centuries, nothing can be conceived more wretched than the state of agriculture in India. Instead of wondering at the frequency of famines, we shall feel convinced that nothing prevented their more frequent recurrence and to a more fatal extent, but the exuberant bounty of nature triumphing over the indolence and folly of man.

The importance of agriculture to India is, if possible, far greater than to Britain. So extensive are the Manufactures of Britain, that they render it unnecessary for her to raise sufficient grain for her own support. She finds it more profitable for her to expend millions annually in the purchase of foreign grain, than to employ her capital and her population in raising a sufficient quantity from inferior soils. The case is widely different with India, however. Her manufactures are by no means sufficient to furnish a surplus for the purchase of foreign grain, in case of scarcity. About a third of the population of Britain

is employed in agriculture, but in India the culture of the soil employs by far the greater part of the inhabitants. The happiness and even the existence of the greater part of our Indian fellow-subjects, then, is suspended on its agriculture. This attaches an importance to this object in India, which it does not possess even in Britain. On the manner in which it is conducted, must be suspended the comfort and happiness of the larger part of its numerous millions.

But there are other circumstances which attach an increased value to the agriculture of India. If one object, which those who have promoted the improvement of agriculture in Britain had in view, was, "to ward off the horrors of famine," how important must this object appear in India! Britain is surrounded by countries from which grain can be procured on the shortest notice. But to what neighbouring country can India look for supplies in a case of this nature, when so many of them derive so great a part of their supplies from her? While this renders a failure of crops more dreadful to herself, it involves the surrounding countries in the same misery. When the staff of life is broken on the continent of India, millions in its various islands must necessarily share in the tremendous calamity. Hence a due attention to the agriculture of India provides for the support of a great part of Eastern Asia, while it increases the comfort and the opulence of that country confided more immediately to the guardian care of Britain.

Nor would a care of this nature, wisely exercised, extend merely to the *wealth* of the inhabitants of India. Their *virtuous habits and conduct* are of far greater importance, and how much these depend on the circumstances in which they are placed, it is needless to say. While agriculture is acknowledged, however, to be more friendly to

integrity of conduct and peaceful habits, than most other employments, the present state of the agricultural classes in India is such as to foster every thing that is unjust and oppressive on the part of the landholder, and every thing mean, evasive, and dishonest in those who cultivate the soil. An independent husbandman, free from debt, and looking forward with delight to the whole of his little crop as his own, is almost a phenomenon in the country. Most of them, through the wretched system which now prevails among them, are in debt perhaps for the seed they sow, are supplied with food by their creditors during all the labours of the field, and look forward to the end of the harvest for the payment of a debt, to which at least forty per cent, are added, and which, through the way in which it is exacted, is often increased to fifty per cent. Thus an abundant crop seldom leaves him any thing but the prospect of incurring a new debt for the next year, while a failure consigns him to a state of bondage, which, if his creditor for his own sake suffer him to remain at large, is little better than a state of absolute slavery. To inquire into the present state of agriculture, therefore, and to endeavour in any degree to remove the misery and increase the comforts of those whom it employs, including as they do the greater part of the population, cannot be unworthy of those who feel an interest in the welfare of their Indian fellow-subjects.

The effect of a due attention to this object in India, where human labour has done so little towards extracting from the earth what it is capable of yielding, must be beneficial in a high degree. If in Britain the effect within three years after the subject had been taken up, was declared by Sir John Sinclair to be, that "obstacles to improvement being removed, the farmer was enabled to raise, at less expense, a much greater quantity of provisions, and

consequently had it in his power, without injury to himself, to sell them at a lower rate to the public," how much more may we ultimately hope for the most salutary effects in India through a due perseverance in a course of this nature. In the present increasing state of the price of most of the indigenous articles of food, this cannot be a matter of small import to the happiness of the lower classes throughout India. And that increase of the population occasioned by the freedom from intestine wars and commotions which the country has enjoyed under the fostering care of Britain, can by no means render it unimportant to provide an increase of healthful employment, which the agriculture of India is capable of furnishing to more than double the number of those now engaged therein. And as on the honest employment of those who embrace it, even Christianity rests its highest honours, it being its unalterable law, that "*he who will not work shall not eat,*" it becomes those who wish for the extension of its blessings, to turn their thoughts to the virtuous employment of mankind, as indispensably necessary to public and private happiness. Even Brainerd, foreign as were those cares to the general tenor of his life, was constrained to assist his Indian converts with his counsels in sowing their maize, and arranging their secular concerns, and few who are extensively acquainted with human life, will esteem these cares either unworthy of religion or incongruous with its highest enjoyments. It was from a view of the importance of this object to the welfare and happiness of our Indian fellow-subjects, that Dr Carey, having some acquaintance with the agriculture of this country, attempted lately to call the attention of the public to this object by the following Address on the importance of forming a Society for the sake of making inquiries into the present state of Indian Agriculture.

Address respecting an Agricultural Society in India

The advantages arising from a number of persons uniting themselves as a Society for the purpose of carrying forward any undertaking, are now so generally acknowledged, that to detail them appears almost superfluous. Not only must the experience and knowledge of an insulated individual be far less than that of a body of men, but his means for making experiments and conducting necessary operations, must be proportionably more circumscribed. A body of men engaged in the same pursuit, form a joint stock of their information and experience, and thereby put every individual in possession of the sum total acquired by them all. Even the mistakes and miscarriages of its members, when recorded, prove a source of advantage to the body, while the labours of every one communicate new energy to his associates, and thus produce exertions which would never have been made, had they continued in their individual capacity, instead of uniting as a body. Men of enlarged minds have been long convinced of the great advantages to be derived from Societies of scientific men, and have occasionally recommended them, yet scarcely a Society was formed before the commencement of the last century, and no one before the year 1640. Since the commencement of the last century, however, their advantages have been more and more developed, so that there is now scarcely an object relating either to religion, to science, or to the promotion of arts and manufactures, which is not carried forward by a Society formed for that express purpose.

Among other objects Agriculture has for some years been greatly promoted by Societies formed with that view in England and other countries. The benefits which

already arisen from them are almost incalculable, and the prospects opened by their present labours are of the most encouraging nature. The capabilities of the soil to enrich a nation to an almost indefinite extent, have been clearly demonstrated by their reports, and the present value of landed property in England compared with its former value, must convince any reasonable person, that among those objects for the promotion of which associations can be formed, there are few more important than the agriculture of a country.

The practical part of agriculture in all countries is conducted by men whose habits and circumstances, as well as their circumscribed means, dispose them to pursue the same routine of operations, whether right or wrong, to which their predecessors were accustomed. They must necessarily be, to a great degree, ignorant of the methods practised in distant provinces, and on soils differing from those on which they reside, and are therefore found to be strongly prejudiced against every innovation, whatever advantages it may promise. An Agricultural Society, by collecting information relative to the actual practice in different countries, or in different provinces of the same country, could not fail of discovering many errors in the management of land and stock, which it would endeavour to correct, while, on the other hand, modes of cultivation practised in particular districts would be recognized as superior and worthy of adoption elsewhere, the nature of different soils, and the advantages or disadvantages of particular crops, as well as of particular modes of management, would be better understood, the nature and value of stock, and the most obvious means of improving it, be gradually developed, and, in short, innumerable improvements in every department would thereby be gradually introduced.

An Agricultural Society in India, therefore, which it is the object of this Prospectus to recommend, could not fail of producing the most beneficial results, both as it respects the Peasantry, the Landholders, the Europeans who engage in its promotion, and the Country at large. It would tend to enlarge the ideas of the Peasantry, to dissipate their prejudices, to call forth their latent energies, to encourage their industry, and to promote their respectability and usefulness in society. It will be scarcely denied that the peasantry of India are in a condition much below that in which the great body of English Farmers were previously to the forming of Agricultural Societies there, and yet these farmers have in many instances learned the art of raising upon the same land more than four times the produce they formerly raised, and to maintain themselves and their families in a much more reputable manner than they formerly did, notwithstanding the value of the land, and consequently its rent, have been quadrupled. The Landholders would soon feel the benefits arising from the labours of an Agricultural Society in the increasing value of their estates, the greater comfort and happiness of their tenants, and the gradual cessation of those mean arts too frequently practised, in order to evade the payments of their rents. And every European who engages in promoting the interests of his fellow-creatures in India must feel a copious return of pleasure when he witnesses the success of his endeavours. Indeed there are few who would not realize a continual source of enjoyment in viewing the improvement of this country, the increasing respectability and happiness of its inhabitants, and the advancement of pursuits which are in every country the most friendly to human happiness.

By associating Native Gentlemen of landed estates with Europeans who have studied this subject, and have made

observations upon the practice of Agriculture in different countries, we should gradually impart to them more correct ideas of the value of landed property, of the possibility of improving it, and of the best methods of accomplishing so desirable an end, and should at the same time convince them of the importance of studying the true interest of their tenantry, and introducing improvements on their estates. The draining of marshes, the cultivation of large tracts of country now not only useless, but the resort of savage beasts and the source of severe diseases—the improvement of stock—the creation of a larger quantity of the necessaries and conveniences of life, and of raw materials for manufactures—the gradual conquest of that indolence which in Asiatics is almost become a second nature;—and the introduction of habits of cleanliness, and a neat arrangement of domestic conveniences, in the place of squalid wretchedness, neglect, and confusion, in a word, of industry and virtue in the room of idleness and vice, might all by an association of this nature in time become obviously important even to the natives themselves. These are some of the benefits upon which we may reasonably calculate as the consequences of an Agricultural Society in India, and every lover of mankind will undoubtedly acknowledge them to be such methods of doing good to his fellow-creatures as are worthy of his closest attention.

Were an Agricultural Society formed in India, its first endeavours would be directed to the obtaining of information upon the almost innumerable subjects which present themselves, it would thereby gradually accumulate a stock of knowledge upon every subject connected with those enquiries, which when embodied would comprise the total of the present ideas, the experiments, the general practice, and the proposed plans of a great number of in-

dividuals, combined indeed with a history of errors, mistakes, and failures, which, however, though injurious to the individuals who make them, would be of the utmost advantage to society

Agriculture being of the first importance to all countries, the methods employed to raise crops, and conduct the other parts of rural economy, must so vary with soil, climate, and other local circumstances, as to make it impossible for any individual to be practically acquainted with them all. Too much praise can scarcely be given to local establishments whether public or private. They are of the greatest value in ascertaining the capability of particular districts to produce certain crops, and in making important trials of particular modes of culture, but it would be impossible to form establishments of this nature sufficiently extensive to admit those numerous experiments which must be applied to even a few of those diversified circumstances connected with the agriculture of a large empire, which comprises every variety of situation and climate. For though Divine Providence has so ordered it that most of the culmiferous plants which are of the first importance as articles of food, are able to bear almost equally the severe winters of the north, and the burning heat of the torrid zone, yet the mode of cultivation must be greatly varied to insure success in these different climates. It is also obvious that many plants which furnish useful and valuable crops in one climate, cannot be cultivated in another except as articles of curiosity, hence that variety of plants and trees capable of being cultivated in different parts of India, and of forming rich fields, luxuriant gardens and orchards, and valuable forests of timber, of clothing the highest mountains and the deepest valleys, and overspreading the most extensive plains though composed of every variety of soil, renders neces-

sary some plan which may stimulate and direct agricultural operations far more extensive than those which any local establishment can possibly embrace. By collecting the result of actual experiments and established practice in all situations, the members of an Agricultural Society would so embody and employ their accumulated information, as to make it contribute materially to the general good.

An Agricultural Society, among other things naturally presenting themselves, *would pay close attention to the Improvement of Land*, by encouraging a superior mode of cultivation, by ascertaining the best kinds of manure, and the best method of applying them, by encouraging neat workmanship, by draining, embankment, a proper rotation of crops, and a prudent management of stock, and by other methods which their united experience might suggest. It would be presumptuous to say that the mode of agriculture used in any country is brought to such perfection as to make all attempts to advance it unnecessary. There is nothing human which does not admit of improvement, how much, then, must remain to be done in a country where the same system, with scarcely a single variation, has been persisted in for many centuries¹. Indeed we may safely aver, that so far as regards improvement, almost every thing remains yet to be done.

It is only a few years since any tolerable information upon *the best method of properly cropping Land*, and of the best rotations of crops in particular situations, was obtained in Europe, and it would be unfair therefore to suppose that any thing respecting it is known to the natives of India. In many parts of this country the same crop is invariably raised on the same ground year after year, and if ever an alteration is made, it depends more upon the kind of seed the farmer happens to have by him, than

upon the nature of the land, or upon his wish to improve it. It is probable that the distinction between those crops which improve, and those which deteriorate the soil, is totally unknown in India, and that a scientific rotation of crops is a subject to which all cultivators are strangers. The same may be said of manure, the greatest part of which is generally consumed for fuel, without any idea of its value to enrich the soil, or of the quantity which ought to be used to produce the greatest effect.

Another object to be pursued by an Agricultural Society is, *the introduction of new and useful Plants*. That there are great numbers of plants suited to the soil and climate of India besides those already cultivated, no one will deny. The great and increasing demand made by the arts and manufactures upon the produce of the soil for particular productions, is such as to require a variety of plants suited to every soil and calculated to furnish crops for all sorts of land, and it only requires the united efforts of public-spirited men to bring these articles to notice and encourage their cultivation.

The improvement of Implements of Husbandry has occupied the attention of some of the first mechanics in Europe, in countries where, previously to these improvements, the meanest implement far surpassed the best which is to be found in India. This would naturally be an additional object of the Society now proposed. The Europe Plough and the Harrow, the Scythe and the Sickle, the Fork and the Rake, with the Cart to carry the produce of the soil to the Farmer's yard, and a great number of other desirable implements, must, it is true, be introduced by slow degrees, and their utility clearly proved, so as to induce the indigent farmers of Hindoost'han to discern their usefulness and ultimately adopt them in practice. But that they might thus be introduced there can remain little doubt.

No attempt to improve Stock appears ever to have taken place in India, but every thing has been left to nature, there is, however, every reason to think that the breed of Horses, Cows, Sheep, Goats, Swine, and of every other useful animal, might be improved as effectually as it has been in other countries, were proper means employed to accomplish the end. The quantity of milk in cows might undoubtedly be increased, the quality of wool might be improved, a stronger and more useful race of cattle both for draught and burden might be gradually introduced, and in short every thing might be expected from persevering attempts to improve those animals which come under the denomination of stock, whether intended for Labour, the Dairy, or Food. This then would form a proper object to call forth the exertions of an Agricultural Society.

But another object which it is exceedingly desirable to encourage, is, *the bringing of Waste Lands into a state of Cultivation*. The quantity of land in India now lying uncultivated, is so large as almost to exceed belief. extensive tracts on the banks of the numerous rivers, are annually overflowed, and produce little except long and coarse grass, scarcely eaten by cattle when young and tender, and never attempted to be made into hay, or to be turned to any useful account, that very small part excepted which is employed in thatching the houses of the natives. During the rains, these tracts are the haunt of wild buffaloes, which in the night come up from them, and devour the crops of rice on the higher lands, and in the cold season, wild hogs, tigers, and other noxious animals, unite with the buffaloes in occupying these pernicious wastes. The securing of these from inundation by embankments or by other methods, is an object of prime importance as it respects the security and healthfulness of the country, and the increase of good meadows, or valuable arable land,

would add greatly to its prosperity The same observations will apply to the vast tracts which are now wholly overrun with wood, and which being entirely neglected, and neither valuable as forest, pasture, nor arable land, subtract from the salubrity of the country, and prove a nuisance to the surrounding districts by affording shelter to great numbers of noxious animals

In a country like India, where, even in those parts which have been longest under the British dominion, though ample security is given to the property of all, the oppressions of land-owners and petty officers are with difficulty restrained, where the cultivators of the soil are considered as mean and beneath the notice of the higher parts of the community, where indolence so pervades all ranks as to reduce the whole to an inert mass, and where, in all the districts not subject to Britain, the whole population has been constantly exposed to such flagrant injustice and oppression, that no one could reasonably promise himself security for a single night, it is natural to suppose that Agriculture should be in many parts entirely neglected, and in others partially followed, and that under great disadvantages Thus, one of the finest countries in the world, comprising almost every variety of climate and situation, diversified by hills and valleys, intersected in every part by streams, most of which, navigable six months in the year and many of them through the whole year, afford every facility for carrying manure to the land and every part of the produce to market, as far as it respects its Agricultural interests, is in the most abject and degraded state

It is also known and lamented that the state of Horticulture in this country is almost as low as that of Agriculture, so that except in the gardens of certain Europeans who at a great expense procure a few articles for the table, there is no-

thing to be met with besides a few wild herbs, or garden productions of the most inferior kind. All that is seen of orchards amounts to no more than clumps of mango trees crowded together without judgment, and in which the quality of the fruit is but little consulted. The improvement of fruits is almost neglected, and every thing which can contribute to the furnishing of our tables with wholesome and agreeable vegetables, and fine fruits, is yet to be commenced, not to mention that Ornamental Gardening is scarcely known. We depend upon Europe for seeds, of which, when we have obtained them at a great price, scarcely one in five hundred vegetates, and even after it has sprung up, seldom comes to perfection through the ignorance or negligence of the native gardeners. It is notwithstanding well known, that one part or other of India would suit every production, and bring every kind of seed to maturity, so that, by a free communication, those parts of the country in which the seeds of particular plants do not come to perfection, might be easily supplied with them from others, and useful plants and fruits might be gradually acclimated so as to be plentiful in every part of India. The introduction of the potatoe, and more recently of the strawberry, are sufficient to shew that the attempts of insulated individuals have not been in vain. How much more then might be accomplished by the joint efforts of a number of persons arduously engaged in the same pursuit!

The giving of premiums for successful cultivation, for neat and well managed work, for the improvement of waste lands, for the successful cultivation of a crop of any new and useful plant, the improvement of stock, and the invention or improvement of any implement of husbandry, would, in all probability, contribute much to call forth the talents of the inhabitants of this country, and stimulate

them to exertions, which would be necessarily followed by the desired improvements in a greater or less degree. By an Agricultural Society, premiums could be given to deserving individuals as a reward for such operations as might be laid down in its rules. And as the only way by which improvements may be communicated, and modes of culture made known, is, by publishing Reports of the proceedings of Societies, and communications from individuals describing either successful or unsuccessful practice, it would be desirable that such a Society publish its Reports at stated periods in the English language, and in at least two of the

country, without whose cordial co-operation nothing of this nature can ever be attempted, and from any of whom he will feel honoured by a letter on the subject. And both in forming such a Society, and in subsequently promoting its objects, important to the happiness of the country as they regard them, the Writer and his Colleagues will feel happy in doing all their other avocations will permit

W. CARLY.

If the ideas contained in this Address be correct, it must be evident that few things will tend more immediately to lessen the misery, and increase the comforts of the bulk of our Indian fellow-subjects, than a due attention to the improvement of agriculture. If it has been so entirely neglected in some parts of India, and so partially followed in others, that one of the finest countries in the world, blessed with almost every variety of climate, diversified by hills and valleys, and intersected throughout by streams most of them navigable the whole year round, is still, as to its agricultural interests, in the most abject and degraded state, few things can be of greater importance to its temporal welfare and prosperity, than that attention to this subject which has effected so much for Britain herself. And if this attention were extended to the waste lands annually overflowed, and through their luxuriant vegetation become the haunt of noxious animals, together with those vast tracts now wholly covered with woods, and serving only to shelter the most destructive beasts, and to injure the natural salubrity of the country, it is not easy to say what the effect might be in a course of years. It should be considered that agriculture is the chief employment of the inhabitants of India, and

that this employment tends to nourish the most virtuous habits, while the plenty created by perhaps double the present produce being drawn from the ground, would diffuse satisfaction among all ranks, and increase their attachment to the government through which these blessings were enjoyed

In addition also to the abundance which would be thus diffused throughout the country, the surplus of grain exported to the various countries of Eastern Asia must greatly tend to enrich India, which indeed the raw commodities yielded by her soil are of themselves almost sufficient to do, of which it is enough to mention her opium, her indigo, her silk, and her cotton. The effect of this must be, that Britain would be endeared to her in a high degree, to whose guardian care she must feel indebted for these blessings, which would vanish, as by enchantment, the moment her fostering hand was withdrawn. Thus the domestic enjoyments of the peasant and the affluence of the merchant would alike inculcate in the strongest terms that the friendship of Britain was to India the choicest earthly blessing

But it is freely acknowledged that to that degree of attention being given to Agriculture in India, which it has obtained in Britain, there are obstacles which do not exist at home. In our own country, as Sir John Sinclair properly observes, gentlemen of large landed property naturally take a deep interest in agriculture, because it tends so immediately to the improvement of their estates. The value of the landed property possessed by the Forty-six Noblemen and Gentlemen who composed the gratuitous Board of Agriculture, must have exceeded Twenty Millions sterling, when its rental annually could scarcely have fallen short of a Million. But among those of our countrymen in India upon whom must devolve the burden of

care in this instance, *not one of them owns a single foot of that soil the improvement of which must be the object of their cares* ' This is a singular fact in the history of nations, and on various accounts deserves the most serious consideration. It demonstrates at once the disinterestedness of that benevolent concern which so many of our countrymen take in the future welfare of India. ' The grand stimulus to public spirit in other countries, is in India completely wanting. If a Roman could formerly say "our country includes our parents, our children, our relatives, and all who are dear to us," this no Briton can say respecting India, the country whose welfare he makes the chief object of his concern. The great stimulus so often felt respecting plans which look forward to the future benefit of a country, is here entirely absent, the idea that, if we ourselves reap no advantage from our anxiety and labours, our posterity will fully enjoy the fruit of them after our decease. It is a fact that by far the greater part of those engaged even in legislating for India to remote ages, may with truth look forward and say, "whatever be the effect of the measure now before us, we may be certain that in ten years' time, if not sooner, we and our children shall be forever removed from all the effects of its immediate operation." The natural tendency of this system may well form matter of deep reflection. While it exalts that benevolence which in these circumstances can care for India as for its natal soil, it may render measures and plans intended for her benefit rather palliative than thorough, rather suited to the present moment, than such as, applying a radical cure to evils, are necessarily slow in their operation, and likely to effect little before those who have originated them have bid adieu to India for ever.

The system of excluding every British born subject

from any property or interest in the soil of the country, is so serious a bar to the future improvement of India, both in a natural and moral point of view, that it is worth the labour to examine it in its most important bearings. It doubtless originated in a laudable care to preserve our Indian fellow-subjects from insult and violence, which it was feared could scarcely be done, if natives of Britain, wholly unacquainted with the laws and customs of the people, were permitted to settle indiscriminately in India. While the wisdom of this regulation at that time is not impugned, however, it may not be improper to enquire whether at the present time a permission to hold landed property, to be granted by Government to British subjects in India, according to their own discretion, might not be of the highest benefit to the country, and in some degree advantageous to the Government itself.

in any other way, the reverse felt in India would be unspeakably great. At present all the learning, the intelligence, the probity, the philanthropy, the weight of character existing in Britain, are brought to bear on India. There is scarcely an individual sustaining a part in the administration of affairs, who does not feel the weight of that tribunal formed by the suffrages of the wise and the good in Britain, though he be stationed in the remotest parts of India. Through the medium of a free press, the wisdom, probity, and philanthropy which pervade Britain, exercise an almost unbounded sway over every part of India, to the incalculable advantage of its inhabitants, constituting a triumph of virtue and wisdom thus, unknown to the ancients, and which will increase in its effects in exact proportion to the increase in Britain of justice, generosity, and love to mankind. Let India, however, be severed from Britain, and the weight of these is felt no more. Though it should remain in the hands of Europeans, these, disjoined from Britain, where their name would probably be devoted to infamy, would from that time forward have little or no regard to public opinion there, and when once dead to a country they never expected to revisit, what would deter them from the most wanton exercise of power, and the indulgence of every appetite the growth of Asiatic climes? These feelings and habits, which would grow stronger in every succeeding generation, would leave every thing to be feared from Europeans dead to Britain, and imbued with Asiatic ideas. Under Divine Providence, therefore, the happiness of India is wholly suspended on her connection with Britain being preserved inviolate.

Happily, however, there is nothing of this nature to be feared from any thing which now appears in view, and least of all from the exercise of a wise and discreet per-

mission in Government to British-born subjects to hold lands in India. The class of those who would avail themselves of this permission would necessarily be select. Without being in some degree monied men, they could not purchase land. They would in general be persons of education therefore, and what would be scarcely less important, they would possess property that could not be quickly removed, which would detain them under the absolute power of the laws of the country. Moreover the number of these British settlers would not be great, which indeed the permission of Government could easily secure. While none could apply with propriety but monied men, only those even of this class would be likely to vest their property in land, who felt unable to purchase a competent estate in Britain, as the feelings of Britons must be greatly altered before any man capable of obtaining a competence in Britain, would forego the physical and intellectual enjoyments she affords, for any gain which might arise from speculations in land amidst the burning climes of India. To any man, what is gain after he has secured a competence for the enjoyment of life, if it must be purchased at the expense of dragging out the remainder of his existence in a foreign climate inimical to his health and constitution? Are not employments the most lucrative, which could be held to the end of life, constantly given up for the joys of home, when only a moderate competence has been secured?

While this class, however, few as they would be, would be more completely under the power of those laws by which the peace of the country is secured, than before they possessed landed property, it is a fact, that in case of outrage or injury, it is in most cases easier for a native to obtain justice against a European, than for a European to obtain redress if insulted or wronged by a native

This circumstance, attended as it may be with some inconvenience, reflects the highest honour on the British name, it is a fact of which India affords almost the first instance on record in the annals of history. Britain is nearly the first nation in whose foreign Courts of Justice a tenderness for the native inhabitants habitually prevails over all the partialities arising from country and education. If there ever existed a period, therefore, in which a European could oppress a native of India with impunity, that time is passed away—we trust for ever.

That a permission of this nature might tend to sever India from Britain after the example of America, is of all things the most improbable. Those who in any country wish for changes and revolutions, are seldom such as possess a great portion of landed property therein; and in India a European possessed of landed property, must be almost insane not to discern the circumstances in which this property would be placed, were any thing ever to withdraw from India the guardian care of Britain. What in that case should prevent the native powers of India from over-running the country? or those who might wish to govern it, from falling out among themselves, and thus rendering the country a prey to anarchy, rapine, and plunder?

Nothing, however, can be more unfounded than the idea that a number of Europeans in India *would be able* to imitate the example of America, were they insane enough to make the attempt. Such as admit it for a moment, have never weighed the circumstances of either country, than which nothing can be more dissimilar. India is not a *Colony of Britain*, filled with its descendants, and with those alone. It contains a multitude of nations separated from each other by a variety of languages, all accustomed to revere and obey the power of Britain.

What could America have done, if, instead of containing two millions of Europeans, she had contained only forty or fifty thousand, scattered among as many millions of the indigenous inhabitants of the country, devoted to the British government, and accustomed to obey it from their earliest years? To have drawn so many nations, differing in their languages, from their attachment to Britain, would have been impracticable, the very attempt must have been discovered in the bud. For forty or fifty thousand European inhabitants even to have collected themselves into a body from all parts of a country extending two thousand miles, would have been impossible, without such a previous knowledge being obtained of their movements as must have rendered them vain, and secured the loss of their estates and of all their influence. No attempt of this nature has ever yet succeeded in a country where the landholders and the peasantry were of different nations.

Moreover the circumstance of India's being surrounded with other possessions of Britain, must render every attempt of this nature improbable. Long before the number of British landholders in India shall have become considerable, Penang and the Eastern Isles, Ceylon, the Cape, and even the Isles of New South Wales, may in European population far exceed them in number, and unitedly, if not singly, render the most distant step of this nature as impracticable, as it would be ruinous to the welfare and happiness of India. Nothing, therefore, can be more silly than to compare America, wholly a British Colony, animated by one general feeling, where the indigenous inhabitants, had they been all in the interest of Britain, were not a tenth as numerous as the colonists themselves, who held in their hands the militia, the revenues, and the government of the country, with a few

British landholders, without any share in the government, or the collecting of the revenues, and surrounded by so many millions of natives accustomed to the most regular and prompt obedience to a government from which they have derived blessings before unknown to India

But while nothing can be more absurd than the idea of any disturbance ever arising to Government from a few British landholders, the value of whose property would depend on the preservation of tranquillity throughout the country, there are few things more improbable than that *any occasion* would ever be given them for discontent. Although they might not be precisely identified by the Government with the natives of India, *they* would not be heavily oppressed, while the utmost tenderness was manifested to their Indian fellow-subjects. If their behaviour were what might be naturally expected, they would be far more likely to share the confidence of Government in a superior degree. And of that oppression being exercised which shall affect *the whole of India*, never was there a greater improbability in any country, as long as it shall remain under the guardianship of Britain, and Britain possess the smallest particle of sound wisdom. That regard which Britain has hitherto so humanely and so wisely manifested for the comfort and welfare of its Indian subjects, is not likely to be diminished by their being increased, as they now are, to fifty or sixty millions, nor by their constantly improving in knowledge and intelligence, and in ability to appreciate that conduct which is equitable and good. The weight of no popular part of any constitution affords a better security against oppression, than do these circumstances. A people in Europe may be cajoled, or their legal representatives may be biassed for a season, but nothing can cajole fifty or sixty

millions of men in a foreign land. Nothing can bias their minds and persuade them that they are governed with equity and kindness—but the comfort and happiness which they enjoy. For this no substitute whatever can be accepted. They will ever judge of the administration of government precisely as they *feel* it to be. That which promotes their happiness will be certain of possessing their confidence, while one precisely the reverse must gradually forfeit their esteem. But happily the reign of giddy favourites, or of court minions, has in Britain given place to that of reason and equity, as far as relates to her Indian provinces. Whatever may be thought of the government of Mr Hastings and those who immediately preceded him, for these last forty years India has certainly enjoyed such a government as none of the provinces of the Persian or the Roman empire ever enjoyed for so great a length of time in succession, and, indeed, one almost as new in the annals of modern Europe, as in those of India.

When all circumstances are coolly examined, therefore, it may scarcely appear wise to deny longer to India the solid advantages she would derive from a select body of men possessing an interest in the soil in different parts of India, whose object it would be to improve the country, and contribute in every possible way to its general tranquillity and the welfare of its native inhabitants. Among the advantages which might result from this step would be the following

These would feel the deepest interest in improving the Agriculture of the country. This would be the natural result of their holding landed property therein. To all the motives which so strongly urge our countrymen at present to exert themselves for its improvement, they would feel added the most powerful of all, that of increasing the value of their

own property, which must ever be suspended on the flourishing state of Indian agriculture and commerce. This, however, would promote the benefit of the whole country, which must naturally share the advantage arising from the exertions and public spirit of European landholders, however few, as the native landholders would be almost constrained to imitate their example. And comparatively speaking, a few on the spot, where they would oversee every thing, and constantly judge of things from their own observation, if encouraged and patronized by their countrymen around them, would be able to do more for India in improving her agriculture and furnishing at a low rate raw materials of various kinds for foreign commerce, than might otherwise be done in a long series of years.

But these would by no means confine themselves to the improvement of the soil. It is impossible that Europeans residing in these circumstances amidst them, *should not feel interested in the improvement and welfare of their Indian fellow-subjects*. To this, indeed, they would have the most powerful of all inducements. Land is of little value without tenants and cultivators, but these can only be procured by manifesting kindness and tenderness to the natives. At the present time many estates may be seen almost deserted through the unfeeling rapacity of their native owners. So little property does a native tenant possess, that to remove costs him nothing, indeed many of those who cultivate the soil literally possess nothing, after the labour of a whole life they are in debt, and have no way of delivering themselves from perpetual bondage, but that of flying to some other part of the country, which is often done, as pursuit, where there is nothing to be gained, would be only a loss to the creditor and landlord, and a return would be unavailing to compel residence, a Hindoo naturally finding his way

where he can experience the least wretchedness Harshness and unkindness to the natives, therefore, would be instantly visited on a European with that loss relative to the property he held, which nothing could remedy On the other hand, a man's interesting himself in their comfort and improvement, would cause them to flock around him, increase the value of his estate, and promote both the wealth and the happiness of the man who delighted in doing good to his fellow-creatures Thus, with scarcely any expense, improvement might be so extended among the natives of the country, as to impart to them that freedom from oppression, want, and misery, which has not fallen to the lot of the wretched peasantry of India for many ages .

Another advantage, however, which would accrue to the country, would be almost incalculable in its operation *This select class of British landholders would gradually form a kind of Local Magistracy*, thoroughly acquainted with the affairs of the country, and deeply interested in the happiness of the people This in India is quite a desideratum The whole of the inferior administration of justice is in the hands of natives, whose venality and corruption are notorious to a proverb, and who often elude the utmost vigilance of European Judges Indeed, when the judicial concerns of half a million of persons by no means averse to litigation, lie on one individual, without his being assisted by the probity and virtue of those below him, how is it possible for the ablest man always to penetrate the maze of fraud and injustice which often involves a cause, so as to deliver the poor and the needy from the hand of the oppressor Besides his European Assistant, however, he has not the least help on which he can depend That complete absence of principle which once pervaded the highest as well as the lowest seats of justice in India, still reigns

among the native officers of justice in a degree that often frustrates the wise and humane views of their rulers. Nor is there any means of removing this evil, but that of infusing principles of probity and uprightness into all ranks, or of placing among them men who shall disinterestedly watch over the inferior administration of justice, and bring to the view of the Judges and Magistrates in the various districts of India, cases of oppression and fraud which they would gladly redress if laid before them. Europeans placed in sufficient number with small salaries in different parts of the country, would by no means meet the evil. While the expense would be great, their having no immediate connection with the natives would prevent their acquiring a knowledge of the real state of things, and as they are not *by nature* exempt from corruption, their having a bare support might prove in some degree a temptation to injustice, but European landholders possessing an estate of their own, the value of which depends in so great a degree on the comfort of the natives around them, would be far removed from every temptation to injustice, while their local knowledge and influence would enable them to be a check to all the native officers of justice who might be stationed near them.

It is needless to add of what value British landholders thus situated in different parts of the country, would be in various other ways. While they could without any expense to Government assist in realizing all its benevolent intentions respecting their Indian fellow-subjects, like gentlemen in the commission of the peace in England, they would be ready to administer justice to those who were near them, and although their influence would be nothing, opposed to that of Government, yet, when exerted in support of the common cause of virtue, justice, order, and tranquillity, they might render essential service

to the country, while they were perfectly inexpensive to Government

But while such a class of landholders would thus gradually form a kind of local magistracy deeply interested in the happiness of the people, rendering essential service to the country, and yet perfectly inexpensive, *they might ultimately lead to a great saving of expense to Government relative to Military Establishments* The vast expense of a military establishment, extended throughout India, is too well known to need mention Nothing, however, would so much tend to lessen the necessity of an establishment so extensive, as a number of British proprietors of land settled in various parts of India, whom both interest and inclination would urge to secure the affections of their Indian fellow-subjects around them, by continually seeking their welfare and acting as their judicious friends From their situation they would of course be thoroughly acquainted with every thing that passed around them, from their acting in some degree as their judicial guardians by shielding them from the oppressions to which they have been subject for so many ages, they must possess sufficient influence among the natives within their own circle to enable them to maintain order and tranquillity around them This would gradually supersede the necessity of a widely extended military establishment for this purpose, which might then be devoted almost wholly to the object of defending the country from invaders On the effect of this in ultimately reducing expense to the Government, while it really added to the general happiness of the country, it is needless to enlarge A single glance of the mind will be sufficient to discover how advantageous this would be to India in almost every point of view

British-born landholders would also naturally maintain all their national attachments, for what Briton can lose them? and derive their happiness from corresponding with the wise and good at home. If sufficiently wealthy, they would no doubt occasionally visit Britain, where indeed it might be expected that some of them would reside for years together, as do the owners of estates in the West Indies. While Britain shall remain what she now is, it will be impossible for those who have once felt the force of British attachments, ever to forego them. Those feelings would animate their minds, occupy their conversation, and regulate the education and studies of their children, who would be in general sent home that they might there imbibe all those ideas of a moral and intellectual nature, for which our beloved country is so eminent. Thus a new intercourse would be established between Britain and the proprietors of land in India, highly to the advantage of both countries. While they derived their highest happiness from the religion, the literature, the philanthropy and public spirit of Britain, they would, on the other hand, be able to furnish Britain with the most accurate and ample information relative to the state of things in a country in which the property they held there constrained them to feel so deep an interest. The fear of all oppression being out of the question, while it would be so evidently the interest, not only of every Briton, but of every Christian, whether British or Native, to secure the protecting aid of Britain, at least as long as *two-thirds* of the inhabitants of India retained the Hindoo or Musulman system of religion, few things would be more likely to cement and preserve the connection between both countries, than the existence of such a class of British-born landholders in India.

The importance of this measure to the Agricultural interests and the general welfare of India, has led us farther into this subject than was at first expected. But we would by no means wish our countrymen to suspend their attempts to promote these interests on any adventitious circumstances. While little doubt can be entertained of the happy effects of the measure recommended, much can be done towards alleviating the miseries of our Indian fellow subjects with the opportunities we now possess. Much has been already done, and a steady perseverance in the present course, will doubtless be crowned with the happiest results. In promoting the Agricultural interests of India, interwoven as they are with the happiness of the bulk of our Indian fellow-subjects, we may be assured that no effort will be wholly without its effect, however inadequate it may appear to the great object in view, and that from a continuance of them will ultimately flow effects, of which the most sanguine had little previous idea.

VI

ON THE BORROWING SYSTEM OF THE NATIVES*

THE happiness or misery of any nation is affected in a far greater degree by the habits and principles which prevail in it, than by the texture of its government or the bounty of nature. To the influence of the most benign government there is a limit, beyond which the search for happiness devolves on each individual. Hence there may exist circumstances in the habits of a people, sufficiently powerful to defeat the most benevolent views of its rulers, and to entail misery where there is every preparation for the enjoyment of happiness. Of this we have a striking instance in this country. India is blessed with more natural and political advantages than commonly fall to the lot of nations—it enjoys a mild and paternal government, ever on the watch to promote its welfare,—a government of which the present race of Hindoos are scarcely able to appreciate the advantages, from the absence of all record of the grinding oppression under which their ancestors laboured for seven centuries,—a soil fertile beyond example, and to the very luxuriance of which all its calamities have been ascribed—a freedom from oppressive taxation, and a degree of leisure for the improvement of the mind, denied to the hardier sons of Europe. With all these splendid advantages, we will venture to affirm that there is less solid happiness

* Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No. I p. 74

in India than in some other countries where the soil is less favourable and the government less propitious. The cause lies deep in the prevailing habits of the people, beyond the reach of the most salutary laws. It is an internal, radical distemper, which poisons all those sources of happiness which the bounty of Providence and the wisdom of man have created—a disease which will yield only to a great moral revolution in the system, to be effected by the persevering efforts of benevolence aided by the silent progress of time.

Among the numerous causes which contribute to exclude happiness from the natives of India, it is our intention at present to dwell only on *the universal tendency to borrow* which pervades the country. In many nations there exists in the great body of the people, a pride of independence, and a deep-rooted aversion to pecuniary obligations. The fruit of this disposition is manifest in the cleanliness and order of the domestic mansion, the nice adjustment of the annual expenditure to the annual income, the gradual accumulation of a resource for old age, and the general cheerfulness of the family circle. How many bright examples of this description can our native country boast even in its present state of commercial embarrassment! In Bengal the picture is reversed. There is no desire of independence, no horror of debt, and it is scarcely possible to assume a greater contrast than between the honest, upright, industrious English peasant, and the Hindoo, dragging out an inglorious existence amidst debt and disgrace, borrowing in one quarter to pay in another, and reluctant to pay in all cases, making no provision for old age, and sitting down in content beneath the burden of an endless prospect of embarrassment to the last hour of life.

This disposition to borrow is not confined to one pro-

vince, to one town, or to one class of individuals. It pervades the whole country with all the inveteracy of a second nature. It originates probably in a natural debility of mind, and an entire aversion to labour, and is powerfully aided by the apathy and indifference produced by the doctrines of fate and irrevocable destiny. The man who can contrive to exist on borrowing for twenty years at an exorbitant rate of interest, might by one vigorous effort deliver himself from embarrassment, and open a prospect of comfort to his family for the remainder of life. This reasoning is lost on a Hindoo, while he admits its truth, he wants vigour of mind to put it in practice. Debt is to him a complete circle from which there is no egress, after he has once ventured within its inclosure. A Hindoo is no sooner free from one debt than he contracts another, and generally incurs a second debt long before he is liberated from the first. He stretches his credit to its utmost limit, and is frequently under obligations in ten places at once. There is reason to believe that nearly three-fourths of the inhabitants in Bengal are indebted to the remaining fourth. A Briton, educated in the virtuous habits of his own country, can scarcely conceive the avidity with which the natives of Bengal plunge into debt, without a minute examination of their internal economy. One who is not embarrassed, is generally a money-lender, which in India invariably implies an usurer, but of this we shall speak in the sequel. To obtain money a native will pledge every thing he possesses. When in circumstances of ease, he lays in a provision of gold and silver jewels, which serve to adorn his family in prosperity and to propitiate the usurer on the approach of adversity. These are generally the first articles through which he contracts a friendship with his banker, and it is frequently with a view to the probable reverse of his fortunes that he provides himself

with these articles in the hour of plenty Every other article of value follows the jewels in due process of time, till nothing is left of his household wealth, but the brazen dishes of his humble board With these he dispenses last of all—and a native is considered in circumstances rather desperate, when he is obliged to substitute a plantain leaf for his brass plate

There is scarcely any occasion on which a native will not resort to the money-lender, even when he has little prospect of being able to repay him Though the circumstances which plunge him into debt are as numerous as his wants, we wish to particularize two grand sources of expense which contribute more than any other to his embarrassment,—Marriages, and the Entertainment of Strangers

Those who have been accustomed to the economy of Christian families, can form but an inadequate idea of the difficulties which attend a Hindoo wedding In Europe, the trouble and expense generally fall on the son, who marries among his equals, after having secured a provision for the expenses of his new connection In India this care devolves wholly on the parent It is the duty of the father to secure the comfortable settlement of his children, since upon this event, depends his most valuable earthly possession—his family dignity To elucidate the subject it may be necessary to mention, that in Bengal every cast is subdivided into a vast number of classes, each of which comprises the descendants of some one individual, who, in the original distribution of family honours, obtained a certain rank which is enjoyed by his posterity to this day Hence the station of every individual in Bengal is settled with nearly as much precision as that of the nobility of Europe, and the distinction of ranks is preserved with as much tenacity as though they were under

the direction of the College of Heralds. No family is lost in the crowd, there are always some beneath it, who view its rights and dignity with feelings of respect, every individual, therefore, possesses an acknowledged and defined rank in this mighty aristocracy. These family distinctions may be tarnished by ignoble alliances, but they may be regained by a series of advantageous marriages. It would be foreign to our subject to enter at present into this wide and interesting field of research,—suffice it to say, that these honours are incommunicable, but by marriage. No new candidate for fame, however powerful his pretensions, can be admitted to participate in them. But what cannot be obtained by merit may be acquired by marriage, and a family whose son or daughter may have been affianced to one of a nobler rank, rises by this circumstance in the scale of distinction, and its superiority is acknowledged by every member of the same cast. It is, therefore, the manifest and natural wish of every parent to marry his children into a family nobler than his own. This may be effected for money, as every thing has its price in India. There are instances of some who with a noble generosity have condescended to exalt the family of a friend by granting him a daughter or a son in marriage without fee or reward, but the most certain and current mode of managing this transaction is, by the regular channel of a bargain. The marriage of his children, therefore, forms the chief object of a parent's solicitude, the grand æra of life, the critical event which is either to continue his family in its original humility, or to elevate it to distinction and renown. In negotiating alliances, he spares neither expense nor trouble. The hard-earned savings of years are resigned with the utmost promptitude, and where no provision has been made, debts are incurred which hang like a dead weight on the family for years to come. The dreary prospects of

embarrassment are balanced by the solid advantages which have been gained, and the elevated rank to which his family may thus have been raised, overcomes every unpleasant feeling

It is not, however, in the acquisition of a more noble alliance only that his purse is lightened. This grand æra in his existence must not pass into oblivion without some demonstration of splendour, and however empty his purse, the applause of the rabble must be gained, and the appetites of an endless host of friends and relations regaled with a solid feast. To a man whose life is bound up in show, the plaudits of the giddy multitude, and the congratulation of his own connections present an object worthy of his ambition. The triumph of the moment outweighs every other consideration, and he spends with a profuse liberality, what it will require years to replace. Under these circumstances, it is by no means matter of surprise, that the expenses of a wedding should bear no proportion to the means of the contracting parties, and that where a man expends the aggregate of his income for years on a single event, he should involve himself in debt.

Another grand source of debt is, the system of Hospitable Entertainment which prevails in the country. In India there are few or no inns for the accommodation of travellers, the support of whom falls on the purses of friends and relatives. As there is little delicacy on the subject of intrusion where a lodging may be obtained, a native in circumstances above penury, is incessantly burdened with a series of unwelcome guests. Nothing can exceed the disgrace which a Hindoo attaches to the slightest violation of the rules of hospitality, and the privations and embarrassments to which he submits in order to shun odium on this subject, would astonish

the inhabitants of Europe To be represented in his own village as one who has denied a refuge to strangers, would fix on him an indelible stigma Under the impulse of this feeling, he submits to every inconvenience with cheerful resignation, and though incumbered with debts, never permits his guest to entertain the slightest idea of the embarrassment which his arrival occasions The constant influx of these guests is very great, and constitutes one of the heaviest taxes on the labour of the industrious. On their arrival, the master of the house transforms himself into a servant, lays before them the richest provisions his store will allow, and when he has no money in the house, borrows on the spur of the occasion, at a rate of interest highly disadvantageous But this is not all,—the custom of the country constrains him to offer them a sum of money at their departure for the prosecution of their journey, and though, perhaps, already overwhelmed with debt, he is obliged to submit to fresh difficulties with every appearance of cheerfulness By thus moving from one house of entertainment to another, travellers are enabled to perform distant journeys with scarcely any expense to themselves, and it is reported that many contrive to subsist altogether on this migratory system, by residing in succession at the houses of their friends or relatives

The natives have likewise no inconsiderable number of relatives and friends to provide for constantly A man who is without employ, lives on his friend for six or eight months without the least scruple While he can obtain the simple necessaries of life without labour, he is not anxious to exert himself in his own behalf with persons of this description the country is burdened The board of the industrious is also surrounded with a numerous company of relatives whom the prevailing custom of the

country constrains him to support There is scarcely a married man in the country who has not some of his own or his wife's kindred dependent on his bounty These he cannot shake off, and they will seldom drop off themselves, but will continue to draw nourishment from his labour while a single meal of rice remains in the house In the support of these indolent drones his substance is wasted, and his debts increased

This pernicious system, though common throughout the country, is rather more prevalent among the higher than the lower orders The nobility of the country, the Brahmuns, Kaystas, and Vydees, are exempt from manual labour, and must subsist in idleness until situations can be procured which do not involve exertions forbidden by the Shastras Hence they continue to depend on the bounty of their hospitable kinsman, until by a long and tedious process of importunity and flattery, they can obtain situations suited to the dignity of their rank or caste This forms a tremendous load the husbandman burdened with a train of relatives, may take the active and robust among them into the field, and turn their time to account, but the more elevated ranks possess no such advantages, and, as the shastras permit them to lodge *only* among their own caste, a thralldom from which the inferior ranks are exempt, they constantly swarm about the table of some fortunate relative who has been so happy as to obtain an employment. It is a common saying in Bengal, that brahmuns may always be found, even where labourers are scarce This drawback on the welfare and industry of the country, the Hindoos owe to the Institutions of the Vedas, and unhappily it is not the only error in political economy which these sacred writings have promulgated

The number of Widows who are every year created by the singular custom of the country, creates another tax on

its industry. However young they may be, they cannot marry again, they are seldom left in affluent circumstances, and at the age of twenty they are not unfrequently burdened with a numerous infant offspring, it is therefore on their industrious relatives, that the weight of supporting them falls. This, conjoined with the number of other relatives who fill the house of a native, drains his substance, and leads him involuntarily to contract debts, from which he is scarcely ever wholly liberated. We are greatly mistaken if a very considerable proportion of the misery which bursts on the sight at every corner of this fertile land, be not chargeable on the immense number of idle persons with which it abounds. For one man who earns a subsistence, there are perhaps two who live without work, and the industry of one third of the country has to support the indolence of the remaining two-thirds. That this is as great a national as it is an individual calamity, must be apparent to every one, but it is unhappily a calamity for which there is little prospect of relief under the reign of the present system of idolatry, no auspicious alteration can be expected but by the gentle and gradual introduction of another economy, under the influence of which the industry of the country shall be relieved from the burdens with which it is now weighed down, the country itself assume a more dignified character among the nations of the east, and individual happiness be as greatly augmented as its national prosperity.

This borrowing system weighs down those on whom it falls *by the enormous Interest which it entails*. The prevailing rate of interest throughout the greater part of the country is Thirty-six per cent or half an anna monthly on the rupee. In some districts it is double that sum, or Seventy-two per cent. Even in Calcutta, where from the

extension of commerce we might naturally expect a more lenient and reasonable system, the poor are seldom able to borrow under Eighteen per cent. Twelve per cent being the legal interest of the country, the written obligation never expresses a higher sum, but the premium which is deducted from the sum advanced, makes up the deficiency. Thus exorbitant usury falls chiefly on the needy,—the poorer the wretch, the higher the rate of interest which he is obliged to pay. The commercial portion of the community, whose credit is firmer and whose transactions are more extensive, can generally borrow on such terms as the fair profits of trade will fully sustain, it is the industrious and laborious who possess no means of rescue from famine but by the contraction of debts, whom this usury devours. This exorbitant interest is deducted from a small monthly pittance shared with rigid parsimony among a numerous train of relatives,—a pittance barely sufficient to procure the common necessities of life. Who would imagine on beholding the wretched hut of the Hindoo, which hardly excludes the elements of heaven, and into which are crowded, in this burning climate, the young and the old, and their every article of furniture, that its miserable inmates are constrained perhaps for years to pay Thirty-six per cent for every farthing they borrow. Even when health smiles on them, their existence cannot but be miserable, but when overtaken with disease, or oppressed with unforeseen calamity, then it is that they may be said to drink deep of the cup of human woe. The inexorable money-lender, whom they cannot avoid, enforces his claim, heaping interest on interest, and though perhaps he never receives the full payment of his money, yet the distress occasioned by his incessant demands is by no means the less poignant.

nant.* In these circumstances every consolation is withdrawn from the wretched family. The principal they cannot discharge, and the payment of the exorbitant interest preys on the very vitals of their happiness, and reduces them to the last stage of poverty and wretchedness. There is indeed scarcely any cause of distress which operates so extensively and so powerfully as this inclination to debt, and the exorbitant interest which is exacted.

The country is hereby separated into two classes, the borrower and the usurer, the industrious though exhausted poor, and the fat and flourishing money-lender. One who by parsimony or extortion can scrape together Four or Five Hundred Rupees, immediately takes his station in this latter class, and sits down to the enjoyment of an income, bedewed with the tears of the oppressed. The interest of his money will not only enable him to live without labour, but open the way for the accumulation of more wealth. The country abounds with instances of individuals who by mere dint of avarice and exorbitant interest, have created fortunes, and left their families in circumstances of the greatest opulence. There are few middle characters in the country, he who has not money enough to lend, is generally in debt, and he who is above the necessity of borrowing, has invariably a considerable number of his fellow-creatures within the grasp of his usury.

The withering influence of this system is perhaps more deeply felt by the agriculturist than by the other members of the community. As far as our observations extend,

* The laws of the Hindoos declare, that when the interest amounts to double the principal and remains unpaid, the principal cannot be recovered by law. A debt double to the original one, however, lies at interest.

there is scarcely one in five of this useful class who guides his plough and reaps his corn on his own independent little capital. Four out of five are in circumstances which constrain them to resort to the money-lender, a being who haunts the footsteps of the farmer with undeviating regularity, and reaps abundantly in that harvest of gain. The ploughman borrows corn for the support of his family during the season, till his own crop be ripe, when he repays his debt in kind at Fifty per cent advance. To compute his loss with accuracy, however, we must remember that the husbandman is poor and defenceless, and his banker rich and powerful, that the next year will bring a fresh array of wants, and present again the view of his starving family, which will render it unwise to break with his rich friend, and that he is completely in the power of his superior—a species of obligation of which the one never forgets the advantages, nor can the other the oppression. The corn is therefore lent out at a high price, and repaid at a lower rate, partly because the price falls on the gathering of the harvest, and partly because the lender takes it on his own terms. In the weight there is as little equity as in the price, so that, turn whichever way he will, the husbandman is the loser. He moreover requires grain for seed, to obtain which he generally agrees to repay in kind at a Hundred per cent advance at the time of harvest. There are also times when he is pushed for money for the various occurrences of life, and especially when his landlord demands his rents. On these occasions he must obtain a supply, and his usual resort is to his generous friend, who with well-dissembled reluctance steps forward and prevents any catastrophe, on the security of the crop. In every instance the return made enriches the lender far beyond his legal profits, although the debt may remain, and leaves the husband-

man nothing in return for the sweat of his brow, but the anticipation of another year of equal labour and equal disappointment. We have known many instances in which the crops of two succeeding years have been pledged, before a single clod of earth has been turned up,—and this not in the case of a solitary farmer, but of the greater part of a district.

This system prevails over the greater part of Bengal, and applies to the great majority of farmers. There may be individuals who reap their corn for the benefit of their own family, and sit down to the enjoyment of it without fear of the usurer: those who are in such happy circumstances, however, generally oppress their neighbours by lending *to them* at a very exorbitant interest. The great bulk of farmers work upon a borrowed capital, and consider themselves happy if they can glean a scanty subsistence from the product of their luxuriant soil. The animation of hope gilds not their morning and evening labours, and they accompany the plough with as much listlessness as the meagre animals which draw it. The crop on which they labour will not go to enrich their families, but that of the usurer, who beholds the growth of the corn with feelings of anticipated enjoyment. We pass over all consideration of the impossibility of agricultural improvement under such a system, our intention is to shew, that it ruins the comforts and destroys the hopes of the farmer. In these circumstances he enjoys no hope of final ease. If after a long series of years he is not left in debt, he is happy. Strenuous exertion might lift him into independence, but he wants vigour of mind to pursue a plan of steady economy, and the contentment which he feels from the reflection that his father was in no better circumstances than himself, tends powerfully to detain him in this state of dependence. He has no prospect of

support when age shall have prostrated his strength, but from the compassion of his friends, or the gratitude of his family

The evils of this system do not stop with the personal inconvenience it occasions. It taints the whole current of morals, if it be not a libel on the term to apply it to the inefficient system which in India serves only to keep society from complete anarchy. He who is the last to borrow, is generally the first to pay, and the foremost in the rank of borrowers is generally the last in the list of prompt payers.—The man who borrows in India has no prospect of being able to repay his debt at the stipulated period, in general he never intends it, but leaves the matter to chance, or to the more powerful operation of chicane and falsehood. When the time for payment arrives, there is no expedient too disgraceful, no subterfuge or deceit too infamous for him to practise, in order to evade his creditor. If the moment of payment can be postponed, he retires in triumph without casting a single glance of regret at the inglorious price for which this relaxation has been purchased. How can morality, of which truth is the basis, flourish in such a soil?

Connected with this vicious practice, is that of *making advances*, so destructive of all security and confidence in the management of business. In England when a man undertakes a job, he expects to be paid on its completion; in India it is quite the reverse. The artificer must receive an advance of money before he will lift a tool. In great and magnificent undertakings, where a very ponderous outlay is required, this might be deemed reasonable, but in India, it applies to the most insignificant jobs. Domestic servants, it is true, do not come under this arrangement, considering themselves as regular and established servants, they are content to wait the expiration of the

month for their wages; though, unless powerfully resisted, they will frequently contrive by some tale of woe to anticipate the period, and with them, as with all other natives, precedent follows practice with an unerring step. But in the case of all labourers and artificers, not a man can be obtained before he has touched the silver. If he receives an advance for a certain number of days, however, he is sure to absent himself some one day at least, and as he approaches the term of his agreement, he frequently refuses to work without a farther advance. This does not arise from any distrust of his employer, where a man has been paid with the utmost punctuality for twenty years, he will in the twenty-first refuse to work without being previously paid — In many instances, he will receive advances in two or three places at the same time, which occasions endless litigation among those who have engaged him, creates an opportunity for the indulgence of indolence, and enables him to make his own terms for fresh advances with those to whom he is indebted. The disadvantages of this vicious system fall wholly on the employer, who must obtain a return for the money as he is able, since the workman has no motive for exertion, having nothing to lose, and on the contrary every thing to gain by indolence, because he has already anticipated his remuneration. He consequently embraces every opportunity of defrauding his master, — and by contracting the hours of labour, both in the morning and the evening, and by his heartless indifference during the time he professes to labour, which seldom exceeds six or seven hours in the day, he contrives to reduce the value of his exertions within a very small compass indeed.

Such then is the effect on the morals and happiness of our Hindoo fellow-subjects, which arises from this trait in

their character, this prostration of spirit, evidently the offspring of the system in which the Sudra is degraded in the estimation of all the other classes, and what is far more injurious, even in his own Thus, all the advantages of the climate and the soil, which render Bengal emphatically the Garden of India, are annihilated as to all the purposes of enjoyment To look for a change under the present religious system, were entirely hopeless If ever the Hindoos enjoy the blessings with which Heaven has endued them, it must be through a system benign as Heaven itself, which, while it ascribes glory to God in the highest, breathes peace on earth and good will towards men

VII

ON THE EFFECT OF

THE NATIVE PRESS IN INDIA *

THE great benefit which the nations of Europe have derived from the press, must render every philanthropic mind desirous that it should be introduced to the same extent among those nations who are yet held in the fetters of ignorance and superstition. The astonishing improvement which it has produced on the European continent, during the short period of three centuries, will warrant our anticipating the most favourable results, could other nations be indulged with the same advantages. In these anticipations, the bright eminence which our own country has attained, bounds our view, and our fondest hopes terminate in the prospect of raising others to the same scale of virtue and knowledge. For the realizing of these hopes, the past history even of Britain will furnish abundant encouragement, since before the introduction of printing into our native land, it was, perhaps, little more advanced in civilization than India is at present. The gloom of superstition which pervaded Europe during the middle centuries, was as profound in its nature, as extensive in its operation, and as withering in its effects, as the present superstition of the East. The same lethargy of intellect, the same dread of innovation with which we have to combat in India, prevailed to an equal extent in Eu-

rope,—there is, therefore, no reason for supposing that the same means of improvement, applied with corresponding vigour, may not, in the lapse of time, effect as mighty and as beneficial a change in this part of the world as in any other. There is, indeed, one difference in the comparison altogether in favour of this country. When the press was established in Europe, the mental energy of the European character had not been developed by any preceding exertions in literature, and there existed no works of transcendent merit, which might have induced an attentive spectator to anticipate that wonderful progress which has since been made under the agency of the press. In India the case is different,—the energies of the human mind have been already called into action, and the acuteness, penetration, and literary skill, which distinguish the eastern productions of the last twenty centuries, have astonished even the enlightened scholars of Europe. The question, therefore, respecting the actual possession of such a portion of intellect, as shall impel the nation forward in the paths of science, when the facilities of the press are afforded, is not problematical,—it has been already decided. If Europe, without any of these early promises, has been found susceptible of such vast improvement, we have no legitimate reason for despair with regard to India, where the blossoms have been so rich and so various.

The present dearth of superior minds in this country is no argument against this assumption. Though learning has been for many years in the wane, there is probably as great a stock of intellect in the country now, as there has been at any former period, and if due opportunities were afforded, there is a probability that the progress of knowledge and science would be as gratifying in the East as it has been in the West. From various circumstances the

intellectual faculties of the Hindoos have for centuries lain dormant; no improvement has been made, no progress in the arts of civilization, and the country has, to all beneficial purposes, stood still. This wretched lethargy we must attribute to the long absence of any excitement to excellence. The Musulmans, had they even possessed superior attainments, were not forward in encouraging the improvement of those who professed a different religion. They treated the Hindoos with contempt, they never attempted to raise them, but, acting on a narrow and selfish policy, contemplated the country during the inglorious period of their domination, merely as affording the means of accumulating wealth, or gratifying a desire for political aggrandisement. Another reign has commenced in the East, and amidst the numerous blessings which have flowed from it, one of the most important is, the introduction of that mighty engine of improvement to which Europe is itself so highly indebted—the Press—which bids the slumbering powers of the human mind sleep no more, which arouses every energy into increased vigour, and which, in its mighty progress, subdues the inveterate prejudices of ages, annihilates error, and not only elicits truth, but disposes the mind to welcome it in all its brightness.

These are not the idle dreams of a fervid imagination, calling up unreal phantasies, and anticipating blessings which can never be realized. The era of improvement and of civilization has already dawned on this country. The Natives possess a Press of their own, and its operations have commenced with that vigour and effect which warrant the most sanguine expectations. Within the last ten years, native works have been printed by Natives themselves, and sold among the Hindoo population with astonishing rapidity. An unprecedented impulse has been communicated to the inhabitants of Bengal, and the avi-

dity for reading has increased beyond all former example. Before this period, the press had been confined to Europeans, and the only works in the native languages were printed at their expense, and circulated gratis. The natives have now taken the work into their own hands, and the commencement is commensurate with the avarice of native editors, and the rich fund of wealth enjoyed by the higher class of Hindoos.

We need scarcely remark that Wilkins was the father of printing in Bengal, that the first fount of types was prepared with his own hands, and that the natives who have since executed founts in more than twenty distinct Indian characters, owe all their knowledge of the art to his exertions. The ardour and perseverance with which he prosecuted his undertaking amidst much discouragement, entitle him to the best thanks of India, and future ages, when they recur to the interesting period which ushered in the dawn of improvement, will turn to him a reverential eye, and recognize in him one of those beings who, by the benefits they have conferred on their species, have obtained a name which the progress of time and the development of the energy they have put into motion, will adorn with increasing lustre.

The first Hindoo who established a press in Calcutta was Baboo-ram, a native of Hindoost'han. He was most liberally patronized by H. T. Colebrooke, Esq. and under his auspices, brought through the press various editions of the *Sanskrita* classics, which have proved of the highest advantage to those who cultivate that ancient tongue. He is said to have accumulated a fortune of four lacs of rupees, with which he has retired to Benares, but we shall probably be nearer the truth if we reduce this sum three-fourths, a general criterion for ascertaining the intrinsic value of native reports of this nature. He was followed

by Gunga-Kishore, formerly employed in the Serampore press, who appears to have been the first who conceived the idea of printing works in the current language as a means of acquiring wealth. To ascertain the pulse of the Hindoo public, he printed several works at the press of a European, for which having obtained a ready sale, he established an office of his own, and opened a book-shop. For more than six years, he continued to print in Calcutta various works in the Bengalee language, but, having disagreed with his coadjutor, he has now removed his press to his native village. He appointed agents in the chief towns and villages in Bengal, from whom his books were purchased with great avidity, and within a fortnight after the publication from the Serampore press of the *Somachar Durpan*, the first Native Weekly Journal printed in India, he published another, which has since, we hear, failed. The success, which followed his literary speculations, and the wealth he has acquired, have induced others to embark in the same scheme, and there are now no less than Four Presses in constant employ, conducted by natives, and supported by the native population.

This multiplication of printed works has excited a taste for reading, hitherto unknown in India, which promises to become gradually more extensive and more refined. Compared with preceding years, when manuscripts alone existed, books are now exceedingly common. men of wealth and influence begin already to value themselves on the possession of a library, and on obtaining the earliest intelligence of the operations of the press. Even among the inferior gentry, there are few who do not possess some of the works which the press has created. The country partakes of the same spirit with the metropolis, though in an inferior degree. The encouragement afforded to this incipient plan, has likewise called forth a race of editors,

whom we hope to see increased, and from whom the most important benefits may be expected. The flame which has been kindled, will probably through their exertions be kept alive, and there is reason to hope, that in the course of a few years, there will arise among the leading characters of the country, a body of enlightened natives animated with an unconquerable thirst for knowledge.

Of the works which have already issued from the press we annex a list, that our readers may be enabled to perceive their extent, and form an estimate of their value.

- 1 *Gunga-bhuktee turungnee*, History of the descent of Gunga
- 2 *Joy-deva*, History of Krishnu
- 3 *Unnuda-mungul*, Exploits of several of the gods
- 4 *Rosa-munjuree*, Description of the three kinds of men and women in the world
- 5 *Rutee-munjuree*, On the same subject
- 6 *Koroona nidhan-bilas*, Account of a new god recently created by an opulent native
- 7 *Vilwu-mungul*, Exploits of Krishnu
- 8 *Daya-bhag*, A treatise on law
- 9 *Jyotish*, An astronomical treatise
- 10 *Chamukhyu*, A work containing instructions for youth
- 11 *Subdu-sindoo*, A Dictionary
- 12 *Ubeedhan*, Ditto
- 13 ———, A treatise on the materia medica of India
- 14 *Rag-mala*, A treatise on music
- 15 *Battrish-singhason*, The thirty-two-imagined throne
- 16 *Betal Pucheesee*, Account of Raja Vikramaditya
- 17 *Vidya mnda*, A treatise ridiculing physicians.

- 18 *Bhugvut-geeta*, A translation in Bengalee of the work formerly translated into English by Wilkins
- 19 *Muhemmede stuta*, The praises of Shiva
- 20 *Ganga-stuta*, The praises of Ganga
- 21 *Sukhee-churitra*, The duties of men
- 22 *Santee-satak*, On contempt of the world
- 23 *Shringar-tetol*, A treatise on women
- 24 *Uschee-punchalee*, A treatise on the days termed impure by the Shastrys
- 25 *Adee-ross*, A treatise on women
- 26 *Chunder*, The praises of Doorga, &c
- 27 *Chotumyt-chureetamrita*, Account of Chitunya

If we admit that four hundred copies have been printed of each of these works, including the second and third editions of some, and this will be considerably within the mark, we shall have fifteen thousand volumes printed and sold among the natives within the last ten years, a phenomenon, to which the country has been a stranger since the formation of the first letters of the incommunicable Vedas. Many of these works have been accompanied with plates, which add an amazing value to them in the opinion of the majority of native readers and purchasers. Both the design and execution of the plates have been exclusively the effort of native genius, and had they been printed on less perishable materials than Patna paper, the future Wests, and Laurences, and Wilkies of India, might feel some pride in comparing their productions with the rude delineations of their barbaric predecessors. The figures are stiff and uncouth, without the slightest expression of mind in the countenance, or the least approach to symmetry of form. They are in general intended to represent some powerful action of the story, and happy is it for the

reader that this action of the hero or heroine is mentioned at the foot of the plate, for without it the design would be unintelligible. The plates cost in general a gold mohur, designing, engraving, and all, for in the infancy of this art, as of many others, one man is obliged to act many parts. Thus, Mr. Huree Hur Banerjee, who lives at Jorasanka, performs all the requisite offices from the original outline to the full completion, but though, with true Eastern modesty, he styles himself in one corner of his plates, the best engraver in Calcutta, we doubt his ability when left to his own resources. The plates which he and others have executed from European designs, have been tolerably accurate, and not discreditable for neatness,—but when left to their native unassisted taste, their productions are miserable in the extreme, and however delightful in the eyes of a native, we cannot help thinking that the true and veritable effigies of those ancient and renowned pedagogues, Dyche, Dilworth, and Fenning, and to ascend to more remote antiquity, of Cocker, prefixed to the thirty-third or the fifty-sixth edition of their valuable works, are full fifty per cent before the native ladies and gentlemen,—or gods and goddesses, which grace the frontispiece of these works.

The productions of the press serve as a just index to the literary taste of the people, and manifest with unerring accuracy the progress already made in knowledge and refinement. Judging from this criterion, however, we shall be inclined to rate the present taste of the Hindoos very low. It is indeed low, and, if we attend only to the works which the press is at present employed in multiplying, we shall discover but a slender prospect of improvement. Many will say, and with some appearance of reason, that the increase of the legendary tales mentioned in the list, will tend only to strengthen immorality. There are, how-

ever, circumstances both in the state of India and in the early history of printing, which may mitigate the gloom of these reflections. We ought not to forget that the great body of the people, have had nothing to feed on for ages, but the tales of lewd gods and goddesses. The absence of all foreign importation of genuine science,—the intimate connection of these fictions with all that a Hindoo holds sacred in this world and inviting in the next,—their peculiar adaptation to the indolence and luxury of Eastern imaginations—all these circumstances have combined to naturalize this vicious taste, and to throw a charm around these tinsel productions which it is not easy at once to dissolve. Generation after generation has grown up with a fond attachment to them, till they have been interwoven in a great measure into the habits of the people. It was not to be expected then that a taste for them should disappear on the immediate rise of a native press, the inveterate impression of ages was not to be removed in a day, and though they contain no principle of perpetuity, time must be allowed for the attraction to be broken, and for the taste to be glutted with satiety, before we can expect much amelioration. The productions of the press on its introduction into Europe may confirm this idea. It was at first employed in multiplying copies of the old and favourite romances of Amadis of Gaul, Palmerin of England, Tirante the White, and other tales equally favourable to morals. The taste for works of this description was then in its maturity, and successive editions were printed, till a superior taste, produced by the operations of that very press, transferred them from the libraries of the people to the shelves of the antiquary. We may fairly expect a similar regeneration in India, more especially when we consider the approximation of that great body of scientific and philosophical knowledge possessed by the European com-

munity, and their anxiety to bring it fully to bear on the natives

Nothing tends more rapidly to abolish a vicious taste than the steady operation of the press. The very increase of mythological tales has a tendency to stifle the avidity for them. Being now placed within reach of the great body of the people, they lose much of that veneration, with which they were invested by their being scarce, and though the flame may for a time burn with increasing ardour, this very circumstance naturally leads to its final extinction. Printed works will gradually constitute a powerful source of influence, and works of real utility will be brought into the lists to combat with those of vain amusement,—and the issue cannot be doubtful. Even in the infancy of the Indian press, it has not been exclusively occupied with works of trifling value, two dictionaries of the Bengalee language, a treatise on the law of inheritance, another on the materia medica of Bengal, one on music, two or three almanacks, and a treatise in Sungskrit on astronomy, which have all issued from the press within the last ten years, are indications of improvement not to be despised, if we consider the darkness and ignorance of the community among whom they have found patrons. This is the mere dawn of light in the East, but it is a pledge of the most animating nature, and if these exertions be followed up with the same spirit with which they have been commenced, the task of those who study the welfare of India will be greatly facilitated, and little will be required of them beside giving a steady and propitious direction to the mighty engine which has been already put in motion. One work of real utility purchased by the natives, will produce a greater change than five distributed gratis. What a native purchases, he wishes to read, and thus his very avarice is turned to the account of

general improvement. A work obtained without any pecuniary sacrifice, he is disposed to underrate and neglect, but such is the reluctance with which he parts with his money, that he is anxious to draw an equivalent value from every book it procures him.

It would be unfair in this slight sketch to omit mentioning the great *Sungskrita* dictionary now printing at the expense of Radha-kantu Deb. This liberal-minded native has spared no expense or exertion to render it complete, and the industry with which he superintends the labours of his learned assistants, combined with his own critical acumen, which leaves no word till he has traced it to its origin, and discovered authorities to sanction its signification, will render it a work of the highest value. To elevated rank and large possessions, he adds a wide and extensive acquaintance with science, a liberality of sentiment, and an ardent attachment to European knowledge. And if others among his countrymen were actuated by a disposition to follow his example, we might indulge strong expectations of improvement.

One immediate consequence of the native press has been, a greater attention to the Bengalee language. As the purification of the channel for communicating ideas must precede any progress in knowledge and refinement, this is an advantage of no inferior magnitude. Much of the ignorance which pervades the country, must be laid to the account of a general neglect of the popular dialect. All the influence of the country has, till within a few years, been directed against any improvement of it, and every impediment has been thrown in its way. By their possession of *Sungskrita*, the pundits held the key of the Bengalee language, and instead of using this privilege for the benefit of the country, they strained every nerve to close the door of knowledge on the great bulk of the population.

For this exclusion the Shastias laid the foundation. As all knowledge was said to be contained in them, and as no branch of knowledge was allowed to exist independently of them, the people were effectually excluded from any participation in the treasures of Hindoo learning, primarily by the prohibition annexed to these books, and secondarily, but not less powerfully, by the anxiety of the sacred order to retain all the influence of literature in their own exclusive possession. Though their sacred writings neither countenance nor seem to have contemplated the existence of any work in the vernacular dialect, the common people have heretofore made various attempts to create a species of literary amusement for themselves, by the composition of works in Bengalee. But their attempts were impotent, the language they employed not being under the guidance of the great parent, was contemptible and vulgar, and the orthography invariably incorrect, and the learned treated their every effort with scorn and contempt. The extension of the press is gradually demolishing this odious prejudice, and the common people are almost imperceptibly acquiring that rank and importance in the republic of letters, which the founders of their religion and institutions denied them. No pundit in the last or in any preceding age, dreamed of writing to please the people, or to acquire a reputation among them, but many of the most learned pundits of the present day, impelled by a love of gain, and carried irresistibly down the stream of improvement, have composed works in Bengalee to which they have imparted all that delicacy and refinement they derive from the study of the learned tongue. The language is thus assuming a more fixed and determinate character, and is daily making rapid strides towards vigour and excellence.

This previous improvement of the language was necessary,—it had lain dormant for ages, and a population

equal in number to that of Great Britain, had been deprived of the means of improvement through the neglect into which their language had fallen, when its rich and copious original might have carried it forward in a steady course to perfection, had not the unnatural jealousy of the authors and supporters of the national creed, found it advantageous to leave the great body of the people in such a state of ignorance as might fit them for a blind submission to their superiors. There is every reason, to hope that the present efforts will rescue the language from contempt, and, by rendering it the channel of communication to the common people, and the means of gain to the learned, bring all the talent of the country to aid in its improvement, to supply its deficiencies, and to qualify it for expressing all those scientific and philosophical ideas which the progress of refinement will render indispensable. The correction of its orthography, for which the present exertions have laid the foundation, though among the inferior advantages, is not the least the country will receive. Almost every province has a separate jargon, which from the absence of a chaste and unalterable standard, has been introduced into writing to such a degree that a letter, written in one province, according to the prevailing scheme of pronunciation, is almost unintelligible in another. This negligence the press will very speedily remedy, though some of its productions have not been altogether free from errors of this nature. Many of the opulent traders in the native community now adopt in their letters a more correct orthography, and begin to regard it as another mode of distinguishing themselves from the illiterate and vulgar.

Whether the discouragement of the popular dialect on the part of the priesthood, originated in any apprehension for their privileges, cannot be easily ascertained. That

these must be endangered in the course of time, there can be no doubt. The press cannot continue to throw light and knowledge abroad in the country, and to transform the natives into a reading people, without affecting their influence and curtailing their emoluments. Even supposing the Hindoo system to continue in vigorous existence, the publication of all its rites and mysteries, and of all those acts which propitiate the gods, must render brahmuns of less consequence than they were in times of greater ignorance. For many centuries they have monopolized every information respecting the numerous prescriptions of the Hindoo ritual, all the laws, religion, and religious ceremonies, have been confined to them exclusively, by means of which they have rendered themselves as essential to the spiritual interests of their fellow-countrymen, as the ploughman to the supply of their temporal wants. Works have now been printed in Bengalee, which detail with great exactness all the ceremonies prescribed for the general occurrences of life,—and the people begin already to feel a degree of independence which they never enjoyed before, while the importance of the priesthood is diminished in a corresponding degree. The numerous occasions on which the presence of a brahmun is indispensable, will long secure to them the emoluments which their sacred writings have bequeathed to them, but by the press the fabric of their gains has been assailed, and may in time be demolished.

Of the remote consequences of the press on the character and habits of the people, it is difficult in this early stage of its progress to speak with any degree of certainty, more especially as this is the first instance in which a press has ever been introduced *into a Heathen country*. The absence of a more direct analogy may,

however, be supplied in some measure from the history of Europe, for the triumphs of the press must in all countries bear a very great affinity. If we admit that Europe, three centuries ago, was as debased in its morals, as degraded in its understanding, and as inveterate in its superstition, as India is at present, we can be at no loss to estimate the effects of the press in this country. If we consider the elevation to which it has raised England in this short period of time—an eminence from which she may look down not only on all other nations now in existence who are without the press, but cast her observations back on all the efforts of the human race since the flood, and discover through the lengthened vista of ages, nothing which can maintain a distant resemblance with her present acquisitions, if we moreover call to mind, that three centuries ago, this fair and beautiful creation had no existence, if we compare her former degradation with her present supremacy in all the pursuits which add dignity to our nature, and recognize in the press one of the chief instruments of this mighty transformation, we shall not be deemed chimerical if we indulge the most fervent hopes for the people of India, now put in possession of the key to all this glory. Whatever obstacles are to be overcome in the diffusion of knowledge, the press has already conquered in other countries, and unless we admit the peculiar nature of this climate with reference to the mental lassitude which it produces, as a new and untried opponent,* there is no hostile feature in India, which may not be subdued by its persevering efforts. Whatever changes may be wrought in the transition from darkness to light, there is, however, the highest consola-

* This, however, will far more affect their political strength, than their progress in science and literature

tion in reflecting, that they will be ushered into the country without any political commotions, and without suspending even for a single day the peaceful occupations of life. The only avenue from whence opposition might have been dreaded, was from the irritation excited in the minds of the guardians of the Hindoo religion, on discovering the departure of their influence. This, however, is so far from being the case, that brahmuns have had the greatest hand in erecting the native press, and bringing it into operation. Besides, the changes must necessarily be too gradual to create any sudden and dangerous collision with their interests. Nor ought we to forget that no inconsiderable proportion of Bengal is at present separated from the circle of their influence. The reign of the Vedas has not continued in an unbroken series, numerous sects have arisen, each deviating more or less from the prescribed observances of the Hindoo religion. These sects, however, which have effectually withdrawn their allegiance from the standard of the Shastras, and curtailed the influence and the profits of the priesthood, having sprung up without the slightest convulsion, and continue to make converts without exciting tumult. It is not therefore in the nature of things, that the operations of the press guided by the natives themselves, and separated from all political influence, should occasion any disturbance, the press will perform its grand operations in an imperceptible manner, the improvements it promotes will steal on the country with silent energy, and at the close of the scene, should there be any irritation produced, the advocates for truth will be found to outnumber their enemies, as well as to surpass them in respectability and influence.

How long the mythological system of the Hindoos will be able to bear up under the operations of the native

press, it must remain for time to disclose. The steps which have been taken to secure the arcana of Hindooism from the rude examination of the vulgar, and the anxiety which has been constantly manifested to lock up knowledge in the hands of a privileged sect, are omens of ill augury under the new complexion of affairs. The framers of the popular superstition could not have foreseen, that in the lapse of years, there would be introduced into their country and nourished by their countrymen, an engine of improvement, which had dispelled delusion in every country which has enjoyed it—an engine which would necessarily unfold to the view of all India, the grounds on which their spiritual belief rests. Their system was not contrived with a view to this future contingency, and we strongly suspect that it will not long hold out against the increase of light and knowledge. The rapid circulation of ideas will within a few years bring all the inconsistencies of these sacred books under a course of rigid examination. Their mutual discrepancies will then create suspicion, the geographical and astronomical absurdities, a belief in which, they enforce with as awful a sanction as a belief in the being of the gods, will strengthen these suspicions. Through these weak points the hostility of public opinion will probably enter first, and as the whole citadel is built with materials equally frail, there is every reason to expect its eventual demolition. The Hindoo system of belief cannot stand when separated into parts of which some may be credited and others rejected. It must stand as a whole, or fall as a whole. It is public opinion which now gives it weight and currency; but public opinion is not stationary, and it may be turned into an opposite channel. It is from the difference of public opinion occasioned by the presence of superior knowledge, that those dogmas are ridiculed in England, which

are believed in India as truths of holy writ,—and public opinion in India is susceptible of as great changes as in any other part of the world. Though the present age may bring much prejudice to that examination of Hindooism which the press will necessarily induce, and though the Hindoos of the present day may sit down for a season in quiet acquiescence with the decision and practice of their forefathers, every succeeding age, as the progress of knowledge is accelerated, will be farther and farther removed from these hereditary prejudices, the articles of belief will be gradually compared with a higher scale of attainments, till it will be found eventually that public opinion and general knowledge have advanced a full century beyond the acknowledged articles of the Hindoo faith. When society has arrived at this stage of refinement, it requires little penetration to see that these books of sacred literature will drop into contempt and disuse.

Idolatry has more of the nature of a charm than of a fixed and vigorous principle, when once the spell is broken, its disjointed and disorganized fragments can never be re-assembled into the same uniform and powerful system. As it is grounded on delusive ideas of morality, and in India, on the most absurd views of nature, every degree of general improvement is hostile to its continuance, the ground it loses, can never be regained, and after passing the meridian of its glory, it must sink in the moral horizon, never to rise again. There was a time when the mythology of Greece exercised an almost omnipotent sway over the most polished nation in the world,—it has now passed away, and exists only in the fervid lines of the poet or the pages of the pantheon. Let any man endeavour, even in one of the least enlightened nations of Europe, to restore to it only a hundredth

part of its ancient influence, will not his efforts fail, and himself be covered with ridicule? That Hindooism has lost ground in India, is too evident to need proof. Let any Hindoo endowed with the enthusiasm even of Peter the hermit, endeavour to recall those times when ascetics passed their whole lives in distant and solitary hermitages in company with the inhabitants of the desert,—when they refused the common necessaries of life that the ethereal spark within, liberated from all terrestrial wants and propensities, might be purified and fitted for ascending to its great original, for absorption in the ocean of spirit—when kings trembled at the frown of a brahmun, and princes bent the knee to a spiritual guide, and will he meet with success? The lapse of time has done much toward weakening the spirit of eastern superstition, and the press will do more. Already has it begun to feel the power of this wonderful engine, and even in the very infancy of its establishment, has the press shaken the firm faith of many a zealous idolater. The attacks of Ram-mohun Roy on the polytheism of India, and the system of burning widows, have produced rejoinders and explanations, every multiplication of which tends only to exhibit the weakness of the system, and many who heretofore reposed the firmest belief in the dogmas of that faith which their ancestors have credited for ages, have now begun to waver. The meritorious exertions of this enlightened Native, are, we trust, only the commencement of an uninterrupted series of discussions which will issue in the final establishment of truth, and the confusion of error. He has done much,—he has led the way in bringing to the crucible of public investigation, doctrines which have received the implicit credence of his countrymen from the remotest antiquity. Thus aided by a division among its internal and natural defenders, the

attacks on the citadel from without will afford a speedier prospect of capitulation

The circumstances in which India is now placed are likewise highly favourable to the successful operation of this powerful instrument. India is not involved in complete barbarism like many nations on the American, or the African continent,—many years of anxious toil and persevering industry must roll over those savages before they can be brought to that degree of civilization in which the press finds the natives of India. This then is so much time saved to the exertions of benevolence. India has already made so considerable a progress in refinement, that we may rank it among the foremost of the nations likely to profit by the press,—and as we cannot expect that all the nations of the earth will reach the heights of civilization at the same period of time, we may, on a review of the state of this country and the exertions now in progress, confidently predict that it will outstrip many of its competitors and reach the goal before some of them can have made much advance in their career. The country is full of intellect—the powers of the mind have been to a considerable extent unbound, and though at present its faculties are restrained by a blind attachment to whatever bears the impress of antiquity, it can boast of many advantages to which other nations are strangers. Where among the other nations of the world without the pale of Christendom, shall we discover such proofs of vigorous intellect—such strength and reach of thought,—such refined speculations regarding spirit and matter,—such deep and daring researches into the nature of man and even of deity itself?

The magnitude of the task of enlightening India, is such as to bear us out fully in the idea, that without the aid of a native press, there would have been little hope

of its being speedily accomplished Under any plan of improvement which did not include the agency of an indigenous press, how inadequate would have been even the most liberal subscriptions' The native press will, however, proceed without foreign aid, and diffuse light and knowledge without any external support. If the circulation of printed works, with the view of creating a love for reading, might be considered of sufficient value to form a component part of any plan for the ameliorating of India, we might esteem the fifty or sixty thousand Rupees which the natives have already expended in the purchase of these indigenous productions, as their subscription to the object of their own civilization The sum may at present appear small, since a greater may be raised in a year among Europeans, but should native works increase ten-fold in a few years, (and why should they not?) the contributions of the natives will speedily outweigh those of Europeans, and gradually attain so great a magnitude as to leave far behind all the sums which Europeans can possibly expend in endeavouring to improve the country, and the facility of reading the printed character, with the increased love of reading produced by the circulation of a Hundred Thousand volumes, will undoubtedly be equal in value to any other means of improvement which should involve an expenditure equal to the purchase of these books It is not moreover to be supposed that Europeans will be inactive while natives are active, on the contrary it may be expected that the exertions of the natives, combined with the additional facility of a native press, will animate the depositaries of European knowledge and science to increasing vigour and activity, and induce them to use every exertion to regulate the public taste, and raise it to the true standard of excellence Hence, if the natives print a hundred thousand volumes of fables at

first, the next hundred thousand volumes will assuredly be of a higher cast and if they cloy the taste for fiction, it will be done at their own expense, and thus the first, the most arduous, and the most *expensive* task—that of refining the original mass and bringing it into some kind of shape and consistency, will be accomplished without any disbursement of funds subscribed directly towards the improvement of the country

Should any object to these ideas, the slow progress already made in printing, and the slender prospect of increasing speed, we would beg leave to remind them that we do not consider these ten or fifteen thousand volumes in any other light than as an anticipation of what may, and doubtless will, be accomplished in the lapse of years—or contend that *these* works will regenerate the country with the rapidity of an electric shock. The press has a natural tendency to multiply its productions, when it has not been violently restrained by public authority, it has gradually done this in every country. If we need an example to substantiate the position, it is afforded by our own country. We had the press a hundred years before we possessed a Newspaper, and a newspaper nearly a hundred and fifty years before we had a Magazine. The circulation of books in the reign of Charles the First was but limited and scanty, compared with the present demand for them, and there are many now living who may remember, that within the last fifty years, the number of books printed and sold has at least been doubled. The increase of population in England, however, will not fully account for this increase, as the number of works has increased in a much greater proportion. The fact is, that the *reading* population has increased,—it has been on the increase ever since the first printing-office was set up in Europe, and it will increase in every country into which a

press is introduced Compared with the present diffusion of works in England, we acknowledge that our Indian one per cent is but as a drop to the ocean But this is not a fair criterion . we should compare the progress made in this country with the progress made in England in the days of Edward the Fourth, within twenty years after Caxton set the first types in England We must compare the present circulation of works, the present number of readers in India, with the state of things twenty years ago We shall then find that the commencement which has been made is highly promising, and that if works in India multiply in the same proportion in which they have multiplied in other countries, there is a certain prospect of a speedy and sensible amelioration of its inhabitants — And can any thing be conceived grander than the gradual liberation of the human mind from prejudice and error throughout these extensive regions? or any thing more exhilarating to the benevolent mind than the gradual abandonment, through free discussion, of those erroneous principles which have for ages entailed moral degradation on so large a portion of our fellow-creatures? Had no other event followed from our arrival in the East than the introduction of a Press among the Natives, we should have conferred a boon on India for which generations yet unborn must bless the British name

VIII

ON THE STATE OF FEMALE SOCIETY IN INDIA *

OF the superior advantages which have raised the nations of Christendom to so high a pre-eminence above all others, there is none of greater prominence and greater importance than the cultivation of the female mind, and the elevation of woman to her just rank and dignity in society. Among all other nations, whether Pagan or Mahometan, the female sex is held in a state of degradation, and in no instance allowed to share in those privileges which the men reserve exclusively for themselves. A considerable difference of practice, however, prevails among these nations, and, though in them all, the same leading features mark the condition of the fair sex, there are countries where they enjoy greater freedom than in others. To the East of Hindoost'han, women are not excluded from the general intercourse of society to the same degree as among those who adhere to Hindoo polytheism. A wide survey of the various tribes of India, would probably occasion another subdivision, and lead to the discovery of a more magnanimous conduct towards the fair sex in some of its provinces,—the result of this survey would however place the natives of Bengal the lowest in the scale of generosity in their treatment of the female sex. We propose in the

* Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No II p 152

following pages to take up this subject, and to examine the state of female education and employment, the treatment they receive, and the estimation in which they are held, in the lower provinces, as far as our opportunities of observation have extended

In order to form a just idea of the state of female society in Bengal, it will be necessary to trace the character of Hindoo women in its original formation, and to examine the nature and extent of the care bestowed on them in the season of early youth. The importance which the inhabitants of Europe attach to a sound and judicious education, especially with regard to the female sex, is founded on the unerring deductions of reason and experience. Without it, the whole frame of modern society, so superior to any thing the world has previously witnessed, would quickly lose its dignity and refinement. What idea are we to form, then, of the state of society in India, where the education of females is invariably and systematically neglected—where not one female in twenty thousand, among the rich or the poor, the honourable or the ignoble, is ever permitted to acquire the smallest idea of letters—where the book of knowledge is as effectually closed upon them as though the alphabet were unknown in the country? As there are no circumstances to mollify the effects of this absence of education, we may leave it with our readers to estimate, from a retrospect of the invaluable blessings which the cultivation of the female mind in England has conferred on us, what must be the baneful effects of an opposite system in this country.

The excuse with which the natives attempt to palliate this ruinous omission is, primarily, the prohibition of their sacred books. A still stronger reason exists, however, in their own licentious character. Even the present system of excluding females from a knowledge of books and men,

is found scarcely sufficient to restrain them within the bounds of propriety. To what extent would not immorality be carried, then, if greater facility for secret intrigue were afforded them, by a knowledge of reading and writing¹. Such is, in reality, their reasoning, and it is upon this foundation, rather than upon a veneration for the books esteemed sacred, that the exclusive system leans for support. Ignorance is by them considered as the only safeguard of virtue, and women must not read, lest they should become more vicious.

The natives contemplate the birth of a daughter with far less satisfaction than the birth of a son, more care and attention being requisite to secure her early settlement in life, and more disgrace being attached to delay. Hence her parents are occupied with solicitude on this subject from the moment of her birth, and at the time when in civilized countries her education would commence, arrangements are in progress in India for her marriage. The young female is therefore not only deprived of every opportunity for mental cultivation, but is snatched at an early period from all the benefit of paternal instruction. Long before her intellectual faculties are matured, she is buried in domestic avocations, to the loss of all future hope of improvement. Subjected to no course of rigid discipline, and, except in the unimportant vagaries of childhood, to no parental direction, she is dismissed into life, and becomes mistress of her own actions with all those evil propensities in full vigour which inevitably entail misery, for though she continues at home for some time after her marriage, her parents have parted with the power, and perhaps with the wish, of correcting her follies. Thus she takes her station in life years before she is fitted for it, and is elevated to the state of a wife amidst the follies of infancy.

It is melancholy to reflect on the early extinction of happiness which this system occasions. In the life of a female, what season is more calculated for enjoyment than that which elapses between the period when her mind begins to expand, and that of her entering upon the severer duties of life? At this season every thing wears an aspect of gaiety and loveliness, the absence of care induces the highest cheerfulness, and gives free scope for the enjoyment of that unalloyed felicity, which comes but at one season of life. The pleasure which a married state affords from a conscientious performance of its duties, however serene in its nature, is still tempered with the burden of its cares. In India, this season of youthful enjoyment comes not for the female scarcely has she time to look abroad, and inhale the sweetness of life, ere she is plunged into the rigid duties and severities connected with Indian wedlock. At the early age of six or seven, her happiness is often sacrificed at the shrine of family honour, while she herself is an unconscious spectator of the transaction.

The effect of the ignorance to which they are abandoned, is such as might be expected. Hindoo women are far more superstitious than the men, and greatly exceed them in attachment to the popular idolatry. Secluded from society except on high festivals, when they view only a large and tumultuous assembly, they are deprived of all that relief from the rigidity of the Hindoo Institutions, which the men derive from mingling in society and becoming familiar with that scepticism which, in idolatrous countries, modifies the observance of religious injunctions. Of those who attend the great festivals, the majority are women, of those who visit the idols when they hold their annual levee, the majority of devotees are women, women too form the great body of

those who leave their domestic avocations, and undertake distant journeys for religious purposes. Their belief in spirits, ghosts, omens, and the like, is much stronger than that of the other sex, and forms a source of perpetual distraction. The precautions they adopt for the preservation of their offspring from supernatural influence are endless, any enumeration of which would only create a smile tempered with pity for the folly of human nature, which, not content with the inevitable evils of life, is perpetually seeking new sources of disquietude, in the boundless regions of imagination.

No consideration enters into the negotiation of marriages, but the convenience of the high contracting powers, and with them the increase of family distinction, of wealth, or of importance in society, balances the scale. Instead of endeavouring to detain his daughter under his roof that he may enjoy the solace of her society, the chief solicitude of the parent is, to get rid of her as speedily as possible, for as she can marry but once, his duty towards her, as well as all further anxiety on her account, terminates when she is once fairly off his hands. Her welfare and happiness form but a secondary consideration in his calculation. If the proposed match be likely to augment the joint stock of family honour, little enquiry is made relative to the disposition of the destined bridegroom, and scarcely any examination of the state of the circle into which the damsel is to be introduced, to ascertain whether the connection is likely to ensure happiness or misery. She has no voice in the transaction, no *veto* on the bargain, but is delivered over like an irrational creature into the hands of her future master, who, for aught she can divine, may prove an inexorable tyrant. Thus the most important æra in life passes by, and her destiny is unalterably fixed, before she is of an age to form

any idea on the subject Before the nuptial bond is fixed, she is denied the privilege of seeing her future partner, or of conversing with him for a single moment, that she may discover the tendency of his habits and propensities, she enters on life with her eyes closed, and with all the chances of happiness against her

Hindoo matches are generally unhappy, indeed it is impossible they should be otherwise, when two individuals are united in marriage without the slightest reference to a congeniality of disposition That which among the nations of Europe forms the strongest bond of the nuptial union—that uniformity of taste, and feeling, and disposition, which blends the affections of the wedded pair—those moral feelings which sanctify the connection, and impart to the connubial state a dignity suited to the high destinies of man,—all this is unknown in these eastern climes With us the most tender and amiable feelings precede the union, with the Hindoos, the union is accompanied only with that giddy pleasure with which children behold a raree-show With us women are immediately elevated to an equal participation of privileges with the husband,—with the Hindoos every action of life tends to teach the female, how vast, how completely insurmountable, is the distance between the wife and her husband, a distance which no affection however tender, no devotion however entire, can completely remove In these circumstances the female has little prospect of a suitable return for the kindest and most generous affection Instances of solid union and unalloyed happiness are rare indeed Where their mutual dispositions might render this probable, the haughty superiority of the men extinguishes that delicate sensibility which must form an ingredient in every happy union

We will now follow the female into the family circle,

where she is to spend the remainder of her days, in which the very first act is calculated to strike the imagination like the bolt of the first door on the unfortunate victim of the Inquisition. The elder members assemble to view her face for the first—and for the last time, till it has lost its mortal hue. The new-married female is conducted into the room, where she sits like a statue, with her face concealed beneath a veil, till it be lifted up by one of her own sex. She then closes her eyes, and stretches forth her hands to receive the presents of the elder male branches of the family, together with their benedictions. After this ceremony, she retires to her own apartment, and commences a life of seclusion and inanity. Though living under the same roof with her father-in-law and her husband's brethren, she is never permitted to converse with any of them for a moment, and if by any accident they happen to cross her path, she veils her countenance as if in the presence of a stranger. With the junior branches of the family she may converse while they remain children, but all intercourse ceases when they attain a mature age. Her father-in-law never mentions her name in the family, and enquires after her welfare only by stealth. There is no general family intercourse, —the two sexes are as effectually separated as they would be by stone walls. The life of social intercourse is absent in these comfortless abodes, there are no affectionate greetings in the morning, no tender valedictions at the close of the day. Their meals are partaken separately, the men and the women, each by themselves, with this difference, that the women wait on the men during their repast, though with their cloth drawn over their faces. During these hours there is no notice taken of the females who wait so assiduously on their lords, except when food or water is required. Even then, they are never ad

dressed in that affectionate language which might soften the asperity of their employment, but in an indirect manner, with a simple notice that more food is required, or that such an one is idle, or that it would be advantageous to replenish his dish. No entreaties can prevail on a woman among the higher classes to eat in the presence of her husband, even when alone with him. How different this state of society to that which our immortal bard has described in the bowers of Paradise! how wide a contrast between European social enjoyment even in affliction, and the coldness of Hindoo manners at the most festive hour of the day!

In her own house the wife is seldom treated with unre-served confidence, while every thing which meets her eyes, the lofty walls surrounding the house, the small windows, grated to prevent her thrusting her head through them, the evident separation of her apartment so as to exclude the possibility of intercourse,—all these things, however natural to her mind from her having been accustomed to nothing else from her childhood, cannot fail to remind her of the suspicion which pursues her conduct. Among the higher classes, where we might expect more liberality, we find less. Women are not permitted to pay or to receive visits, and never leave home except for the house of a relative, and even these journeys are rare, and attended with much anxiety. In European society we esteem unlimited confidence between the husband and the wife one of the greatest enjoyments of the connubial state, yea essential to the welfare of the family and the education of the children. But with the symbols and the practice of this suspicious system constantly before his eyes, how is it possible for a son to grow up with that reverential regard to his mother which ought to constitute the leading emotions of the youthful mind? How

can he liberate his mind from those undutiful feelings which this jealousy must create? Is he not hereby early initiated into the rudiments of domestic tyranny, and by his familiarity with the restraints under which his mother labours, prepared to practise the same rigour towards the defenceless female who will be placed at a premature age under his own domination?

Of the employment of females at home, it is more difficult to speak, it is, however, easy to imagine, that without books, without any useful employment, and without any relief from visits, time must hang heavy on their hands. Those in the lower walks of life prepare cowdung for fuel, fetch water for all domestic purposes, make purchases in the market, and, in short, attend to all the drudgery of the family. In the higher circles, where these cares devolve on menials, women pass a listless, uninteresting life, without diversity and without enjoyment. According to the best information we can obtain on the subject, a wife devotes one portion of the day to the combing of her hair, and to the adorning of her person with jewels and splendid attire which excite the envy of the less favoured female relatives inhabiting the same inclosure. Listening to slander serves to fill up the interstices of her time. This is the highest species of happiness which Hindoo women enjoy, it is the balm which relieves life of its tedium. The faults, the follies, the singularities of neighbouring families, are all re-echoed through these secluded chambers in a ceaseless round. There is no judicious disposition of time, no attempt to occupy the hours of the day with elegant amusements. Even the sphere of their benevolence is contracted. In the absence of every other occupation, one might fancy the most agreeable employment of their ample leisure in relieving the wants of others. But where the women are

secluded from all society, and may not look through the window, how can these feelings find utterance? In the narrow limits of their own dwelling, there are individuals whose couch they must not attend in sickness,—whose sorrows they must not alleviate, however valuable their skill, assistance, or sympathy might prove. When with their husbands, the conversation never turns on subjects calculated to elevate the mind, or to elicit dignified sentiments. After his marriage, it never enters into the mind of a native to instruct his almost infant wife, to improve her understanding, to raise the tone of her ideas, and to render her a fit companion for his social hours. Her ignorance of every thing beyond the circle of her own village or neighbourhood, prevents her advising him on the concerns of life, or her supporting his mind when burdened with a weight of cares, or sunk beneath the influence of adversity. Thus whichever way we turn, we behold the Hindoo female placed in the most degrading circumstances. Deprived of the society of the wise and the experienced, her judgment is stationary for life, and her ideas inevitably low and grovelling. In her family circle she is deprived of the enlivening conversation of her own relatives, who might mingle with the wisdom of age all that suavity which her youth and cheerfulness would inspire,—and cut off from engaging in those sweet charities, whether of a pecuniary or a mental nature, which bless both the receiver and the giver.

Native families are fond of living together, and will submit to many privations before they relinquish the seat of their ancestors. In addition to the natural attachment which endears the spot on which they have grown from infancy to manhood, the shastras sanction the highest regard of it, by declaring the place of one's nativity equal to a seat in heaven, and by directing the religious devo-

tee, after he has forsaken the world, and renounced the remembrance of his relatives, to visit this spot once after taking his religious vows. A considerable share of influence and respect likewise falls to the lot of families who thus continue together. Influenced by these ideas, thousands who annually quit their families in search of distant employments, prefer the prospect of visiting their homes once a year, to the disadvantages of breaking up the family compact by the removal of their wives and children to the scene of their employment. This system, however, occasions endless feuds and jealousies among the women, and frequently leads to a family separation. Hindoo women are habitually quarrelsome, for which the absence of all employment will furnish a sufficient reason. When thus locked up together, their husbands being in general absent, the causes of contention are numberless, and the contentions themselves bitter.

To what extent native women are affectionate to their husbands, it is not easy to ascertain, as there is scarcely any avenue through which a foreigner can obtain this knowledge, but there must assuredly be less ardent affection, and more solid misery among the majority of Hindoo families, than in any European community. The original contract is defective, as the parties are plighted before any affection can have grown up between them. The degradation in which they are afterward retained, and the contempt which they cannot avoid perceiving, are against the supposition of any elevated attachment. Their seclusion from society must likewise tend to prevent that affectionate respect which a wide survey of life might create, by the appreciation of any excellence in which their husbands might appear to surpass many of their fellow-countrymen. In proportion to the presence or the absence of civilization, the attachment of the sexes

seems to partake of a refined character, or the reverse. Now as it would be difficult to conceive of a being more debased in her understanding or contracted in her views than are Hindoo women in general, except perhaps among the naked savages of the isles of the Pacific, we may without hazard determine in which class to rank the nature of her attachment. The peculiar circumstances in which a Hindoo woman is placed, must indeed secure her affections in some degree. Her husband is her sole refuge in this world; his death is only the commencement of severer afflictions, since, if she does not extinguish life to follow him to the regions of fancied enjoyment, she cannot marry again, but must return to her dwelling bereft of her only shield against the contempt of her relatives and friends, to drag out a miserable existence amidst abstinence, disgrace, and misery. His life must therefore appear to her of inestimable value, though we cannot pretend to say how far these circumstances may induce a firm attachment.

The affection of the men towards their wives, is more easily ascertained. Among the innumerable adventitious marriages of the country it is possible that in some few cases a congeniality of disposition may happen to subsist between the two parties, and that a consequent degree of happiness may fall to their share. Where this is the case, however, the attachment is not of the same refined cast as in Europe, but is greatly diminished by those latent feelings of superiority which nothing can completely eradicate. In Bengal a man marries for his own convenience, without any view to his wife's happiness. With us the wife shares the unbounded affection of her husband, enjoys his highest esteem, and is a co-partner in all domestic affairs,—with a Hindoo his wife is only a part of his household furniture. As strangers are not permit-

ted to enter into the families of the natives, we must judge of the affection of the husband chiefly from those outward actions which indicate the feelings of the mind. Weighed in this balance, the Hindoo will be found wanting. Where the most ardent attachment has been outwardly professed, the husband, on the death of his wife, hastens in search of another, frequently the very day after the performance of her funeral rites, making no scruple to employ the articles which have been saved from the feast of woe, in furnishing the bridal entertainment. The wailings of grief have scarcely subsided, before the same walls resound with the songs of merriment. No time is devoted to those reflections which the loss of so tender a connection ought to inspire, no time is allowed for those considerations of the vanity of mortal pursuits, and the slender texture of mortal relations, which, in these melancholy moments, tend to lift the soul above earthly concerns. The wife of his bosom is burnt to ashes and forgotten, and the husband hastens with cold insensibility to supply the gap created in his family. Where second and succeeding marriages are delayed, the delay does not originate in the absence of inclination, but in the want of means. How can we suppose, on beholding such a scene, that any powerful attachment exists between the parties? Could any man of sensibility hasten with such rapidity to forget one whom he tenderly loved? And are we not sanctioned in supposing, that, in general, the character of Hindoo attachments is any thing rather than ardent and elevated? The terms of condolence employed by friends and relatives on these occasions serve to confirm these suspicions. Instead of bewailing the loss of the widower, and recounting the virtues of his deceased wife, instead of attempting to assuage his grief by every variety of consolation, the discourse even in his presence

turns on the nature of his next choice, the pecuniary embarrassments it may occasion, and other considerations of a similar nature, uttered in such a tone of careless gaiety, as would, among those who really felt the loss of the object, render the affliction ten times more poignant.

In general society, women enjoy no consideration, but are invariably spoken of in terms of levity. Except in the article of marriage, where they are considered important, the whole business of life is conducted by the men, as though the other sex formed no component part of society. Nothing can be considered more contemptuous than to hint that a man is influenced by the advice of his wife, and to characterize any opinion as coming from the fair sex, is to consign it to ridicule. To such a pitch of refinement have the natives carried their habitual disrespect for women, that the names which designate the relatives of a wife have grown up into terms of reproach. The exclusion of females from the society of men, removes every restraint, and enables them to indulge in the most contemptuous epithets without the fear of reproof. The whole current of conversation, therefore, not only manifests the complete degradation of the fair sex, but the satisfaction which the men enjoy in its continuance. It is easy to conceive how unhappy must be the effect of this system on females, as it effectually precludes them from all chance of elevation, the least attempt at which would draw down on them the indignation of the stronger party. Equally pernicious are its effects on the character and morals of the other sex, and if any proof were needed to demonstrate how much the refinement and dignity of Europe is to be attributed to the free admission of women into society, we should find one of the most convincing nature in this country where we have all the inconveni-

ences and evils which their exclusion inflicts, brought before our eyes

The Hindoos are extremely fond of social meetings Debarred in a great measure from communication with the female branches of their family, they are obliged to consort together for amusement after the business of the day has terminated But women never attend these parties, indeed they could not with any regard to decency be present, as the conversation is in general so grossly indecent, that no female could listen to it for a moment without a sacrifice of her dignity General conversation among the Hindoos is so immoral, that no native of respectability would permit his wife or his daughter to continue within the sound of that discourse which he himself sanctions with his approbation, and frequently with his personal assistance If we follow the man who assumes the highest sanctity of character in our presence, into the social parties of the evening, we shall find him joining in conversation which he ought to overawe with a frown Instances of a stern and inflexible discountenance of impurity, are exceedingly rare so deep indeed does this national defilement descend, that no meeting seems to possess any zest, from which indecorous allusions are excluded The man venerable for age, though his presence may sometimes confound the youthful debauchee, seldom corrects his impure sallies, and not unfrequently joins in the general laugh, long after the phrenzy of his passions has ceased Now we cannot conceive that in any state of society, however degraded, such conversation would be tolerated in the presence of females Their admission into social meetings would immediately exclude every degree of indecency during their continuance, and would tend to render conversation more pure during their ab-

sence,—and their exclusion has perhaps contributed to demoralize the country as much as any other single circumstance. These social meetings, which one may see in every village, at present only nourish immorality, and invigorate all the vicious propensities of the mind. The ingenuity displayed on these occasions is astonishing. Independently of the broad indehency in which the language is so peculiarly fruitful, there is scarcely a single expression, in its own nature innocent, which is not distorted to some licentious allusion. The interests of youth and the gravity of age are equally unavailing to restrain this corruption of language. The father reproves not his guest for indulging in expressions which tend to ruin the morals of his children who are present, the elder brother interposes no check to the corruption of his younger relatives. Thus the youth of the country are surrounded, from their earliest years, with all that is impure in conduct, and immoral in conversation, and are ripe in iniquity long before they are ripe in reason and judgment. In these circumstances, when religion itself, the source of all superior influence, is the very hot-bed of vice,—when the tongue of the aged is silent,—the restraint of female society effectually removed,—and when youth imbibes its earliest ideas amidst the contamination of brutal obscenity, is it matter of surprise that the flood-gates of iniquity should be opened on this land, and that the strong current of immorality should overwhelm the feeble barriers of conscience and reason?

Equally injurious is this exclusive and degrading system to the interests of the rising generation. It may be easily supposed from the preceding observations that the husband is not likely to consult his wife respecting the education of his children. There is between them no

That the Hindoo female possesses natural affection no one will question, but it resembles too strongly the affection of an irrational being towards its young, and concentrates all anxiety, not so much in the welfare of her offspring, as in the desire of seeing, and feeling, and handling them. In the spirit of this disposition she considers every chastisement as excessively severe, and interposes her authority between her son and the wholesome discipline which her husband may judge expedient. Two parties are thus formed in the house, amidst whose contentions the youth grows up in a disrespect of all restraint, and that authority which, if united, might have produced the most salutary effects, by its disunion occasions the most serious disadvantages, and inspires the son with a dislike of his father, and an inordinate attachment to his mother who shields him from deserved punishment.

From the early records of Hindoost'han there is strong reason to conclude that in ancient times many of the odious peculiarities in the present system of educating and marrying females had no existence, that women, at least the daughters of kings and the wives of heroes, were taught to read, and that their own inclination, not that of their parents, influenced the selection of husbands. In the historical records of the *Ramayana*, the *Muhabharata*, and the *Pooranas*, we meet with no heroine in the disgraceful situation of modern females. They are generally represented as deeply skilled in learning, often willing to display their attainments, and not averse to a combat of skill with the other sex. Nay, in many cases, they enjoin a literary victory over themselves, as the only price at which the suitor can expect success. The spirit of that age must have been much more liberal than that of modern times, since few writers who courted

the attention of their fellow-countrymen, would have ventured on so bold a departure from popular practice. And though the heroines of the song were the daughters and relatives of monarchs, no one who estimates the power of influence which irresistibly draws the lower orders into a servile imitation of their superiors, will conclude that a knowledge of letters was then confined to palaces, or that a practice which received the praise of poets and the sanction of princes, was not in some degree of general application. A different spirit must have animated the ancestors of the Hindoos, to have produced such splendid results of the cultivation of female intellect as exist on record. The contempt with which they are at present treated, could scarcely have existed in an age which owed some of its literary splendour to their compositions. Nor can we suppose, that the female authors of that period were the only individuals of their sex to whom a knowledge of letters was communicated, the beneficial result of granting them an education, must have contributed to render the practice more general.

These ancient historians also permit their heroines to select their own husbands. The father is generally represented as proclaiming a *Suyumbura*, for the sake of his daughter's obtaining a self-selected consort. To the assembly which was held for this purpose, kings and heroes resort from the adjacent countries to prefer their claims to her hand. We deduce from this practice that females were not married during their infancy, but were permitted to grow up to maturity under the care of their parents and the instructions of their preceptors. Admitting that a splendid *Suyumbura* was too expensive for the cottage, we may conclude that the example of the higher ranks exerted the same influence over the lower

orders in those ancient times which it does at present. Though the farmer, therefore, might have been unable to attract the notice of sovereigns, and of valorous men, he might still, in imitation of the practice of his superiors, have permitted his daughter to exercise her own choice. The ancient manners were undoubtedly less odious than the present, and far more favourable to the peace, welfare, and comfort of the inhabitants. What Hindoo in this iron age, however distinguished by wealth, birth, or influence, would venture to depart from the pernicious practice now in use, or attempt to revive the more generous mode of ancient times by bestowing his daughter, as Alexander did his empire, on the most worthy?

One innovation which has probably led to the desuetude of the ancient practice, may be found in the almost endless subdivisions of the native population into family tribes, which in the article of marriages occasions nearly as much trouble and perplexity, as the contraction of marriages among the princes of the Holy Roman Empire. In the days of Hindoo prosperity a much greater latitude prevailed a brahmun married his daughter to any brahmun, a kshetrya, a vishnuva, and a shoodra, selected a bride from among any of the numberless families of his own division. But times are altered in Bengal, since *Bullalshena*, the sovereign of Gour, whom every unmarried brahmun vilifies, subdivided each caste into families, which in the lapse of time have grown up into distinct tribes. A brahmun, in affiancing his daughter, has now to search for a bridegroom only among the members of his own section of the brahmanic tribe, among whom, some are too contemptible for his alliance, and some too elevated in ancestral dignity. It is therefore among only a very small number of families that he can expect to find a suitable match for his son or daughter. This difficulty is not confined to

the priesthood, all the divisions of the people have their subdivisions, among whom, in their turn, the families are distinctly ranked in popular estimation, as among the higher, middling, or lower ranks. Under this economy, to what purpose should a rich and respectable native bestow the highest accomplishments on his daughter, when she will be married, in all probability, to some ignorant and indigent youth, without one virtue to recommend him, simply because his family may happen to possess higher claims of birth, and who, issuing from the dregs of vulgarity, is brought forward to elevate the family of his father-in-law, and to live during the remainder of his life a pensioner on his bounty? For this ignoble alliance, what accomplishments are needed? To shine in the obscure chronicle of an insignificant tribe, what need of those endowments, which would be necessary if a desire to perpetuate the natural aristocracy of wealth formed the basis of marriage contracts, among those who have raised themselves into opulence and respectability? On the present system, the daughter of a rich native is buried in almost equal obscurity with the daughter of one of his servants—the only individuals whom his alliance interests, being the members of his own family section, who are generally indigent, and possibly scattered among a dozen villages. To raise the scale of female accomplishments without altering the plan of matrimonial alliances, would be a mere waste of labour. There is, perhaps, no youth in the country, however splendid his prospective inheritance, for whom his father would not prefer the daughter of a poor villager, if accidentally distinguished in the quality of birth, to the daughter of a rich neighbour, though endowed with the most attractive qualifications, if only a few degrees lower in the genealogy of the tribe. We cannot affirm that these considerations strongly influence the treatment of daughters, but it is dif-

difficult to suppose, that, with this material alteration in the practice of negotiating marriages, a considerable alteration in the mode of educating females should not have crept on the country. Indeed it would be strange if no difference of treatment should exist when a bridegroom might be sought among one-third of the most worthy youth in the country, instead of the selection being limited, as at present, to one hundredth part of the population, and decided, not by the presence or absence of wealth, honour, and respectability, but by the adventitious circumstances of a higher or lower descent. It is not probable that the principle of improvement should continue in favour of the softer sex, when no one advantage could be obtained by it, nor is it strange that among this lethargic people, female education should gradually have dwindled in importance, and finally have disappeared, when every advantage could be secured without it.

IX

REVIEW OF STRICTURES

ON THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF HINDOO POLYTHEISM,
A WORK IN THE BENGAL LANGUAGE,
BY BRUJA-MOHUN

8vo pp 84. without titlepage, printer's name, or date affixed *

IN our last Quarterly Number we had occasion to notice the commencement and progress of the Native Press in India, in doing which we expressed a strong hope, that though its first efforts might be confined to the multiplication of idle fictions, it would in time work itself pure, and fulfil the expectations which might be formed from a view of the productions of the early literati of India, and the acknowledged keenness of Hindoo intellect, and that the period would certainly arrive when "works of real utility would be brought into the lists to combat with those of vain amusement" We then had not the most distant idea that we should so soon be called to review a native original work of this description. Such, however, we believe most of our readers, as well as ourselves, will allow the present work to be, though presented to them under all the disadvantages of a translation. It is a masterly exposure, by a Native, of the absurdities of the present Hindoo system. Of its author we have been able to discover no trace beyond his name, with which he has modestly furnished us in the last line of the book. The work, however, bears internal marks of being purely

native, and evidently owes its origin to that flood of light which has been shed abroad in the country within the last few years, although the whole current of reasoning strongly indicates that the writer has scarcely a distant acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, of which in the present instance he might have made a powerful application. The arguments with which he combats the present Hindoo system, however, taken in connection with the facts and circumstances by which he supports them, are of so peculiar a stamp, that while many of them are such as a Christian *would* not have used, there is, perhaps, no European in India who *could* have thought of them all even after a residence of thirty years. Whether the cogency of the author's reasoning be considered, or his extensive acquaintance with the popular worship of the Hindoos, and the original authorities for the dogmas of their faith, it will, we imagine, be esteemed an interesting publication, but in the whole of the work there is, perhaps, nothing more cheering than his frequent appeals to reason. It is long before mankind bring the errors of their ancestors to the test of reason, but when they can once be brought to submit them to this test, to which respecting idolatry the Divine penmen themselves appeal, we may consider the work of amelioration as fairly begun. It was with the errors of tradition, sheltered by the authority of so many ages, that the Reformers had to combat in every argument with their opponents, and till they succeeded in dragging these forth into the open day of reason and revelation, they accomplished but little. They, however, possessed advantages not yet enjoyed in this field of controversy, since both they and their opponents acknowledged the Holy Scriptures to be an unerring standard. In Hindoosthan the case is different, there is no *one* written standard acknowledged to be unerring by both

parties The appeal to his shastras, with which a native invariably covers himself, must however be set aside before conviction can enter his mind, as there is no error in doctrine, no abomination in practice, for which some authority may not be quoted from his sacred books, and till he bow to the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, the appeal must be made to reason alone

Our author endeavours throughout this work to shew, that the present practice of the Hindoos is a departure from that of their most ancient sages, whose authority the prevalence of idol worship has been unable to shake, and in this he succeeds If, indeed, we needed any thing to demonstrate the invariable tendency of idolatry to plunge every succeeding age deeper in immorality, and with what ease the most offensive rites and the most degrading practices may be engrafted on its corrupt stock, we might find it in this work The original system of Hindoo metaphysics was certainly less degrading than the more modern system of idol worship, and in appealing to these ancient authorities, our author stands on high vantage-ground While, however, we rejoice to see the evil of idolatry exposed, and its authority invalidated, in any way, unhappily these very shastras which hold it up to ridicule inculcate a system which, amidst all its apparent sublimity, is still unfriendly to the sanctions of morality and the welfare and happiness of mankind We therefore remark with peculiar satisfaction, that our author's appeals to reason sometimes carry him almost completely off from the ancient system likewise If the present system of idolatry may be discomfited by means of these ancient works, no weapon but reason, enlightened by Divine revelation, will reach *their* doctrines, scarcely less pernicious, and those which he has wielded against the present system of his countrymen, are even in his hands almost equally power-

ful against the doctrine of matter and spirit, the identity of the eternal and incommunicable Deity with the most unworthy of his creatures. As we intend to give very large extracts from this production, we hasten to the work itself, in which we shall do little more than intersperse a few occasional observations for the sake of elucidating what might otherwise appear obscure. Our author begins thus

“ Addressing ourselves to those pundits and their friends who, forsaking the worship of the Supreme Being, have adopted the worship of images, we ask them, Why, by regarding inanimate images which possess neither perception, speech, nor motion, as the omniscient, the omnipresent, and omnipotent God, do you expose yourselves to the ridicule of all sensible men? why do you expose yourselves to derision by regarding extraordinary motions of the mouth, the arms, and fingers, the striking of the feet on the earth, the clapping of hands, songs the most licentious and infamous, and gestures the most abominable, as conducive to salvation? ”

“ If you say that you worship images because the Shastras say, ‘ He will inevitably be punished in hell who considers the image of the deity as a simple stone,’ and, ‘ if the image be prepared with skill and beauty, the deity undoubtedly enters it,’ we reply, that the very same Pooranas which furnish these authorities, in the following passages altogether condemn images,—‘ All those ignorant persons who regard as God, an image of earth, metal, stone, or wood, subject themselves to bodily misery, and can never obtain final deliverance ’—‘ He who through ignorance, forsaking me the spirit who pervades all being, worships an image, is like one who pours the sacrificial fire on ashes ’ Here we have a complete contradiction in the Shastras, and to settle the discre-

pancy we must adopt one of two modes. The first is, that of recognizing the individuals to whom these opposite modes of worship apply, those who are permitted to adore an image as God are the *ignorant*, to the wise it is forbidden,—here then we have a determinate rule for the worship of God. The shastras and other works have likewise adopted this mode of decision. ‘The ignorant adore the deity in wood and earth, the wise recognize him in the universal spirit.’ But the second mode of decision where the shastras are contradictory, is, to receive that opinion which most evidently accords with reason. Thus, if in one place the shastras say, that the image when endowed with divinity is deprived of its material qualities, and in another, that it possesses no divinity at all, we are to enquire which of these opinions appears most reasonable, and this may be speedily decided by ascertaining whether or not the stone possesses any of the attributes of deity. If by the act of invocation, its qualities of earth or stone have disappeared, and it be endowed with the divine perfections, it certainly possesses divinity, but if the image may be broken by the hand, or consumed in the fire, those shastras which deny it any thing of divinity, are sound and canonical.

“If apprehensive lest the image you hold in such veneration should break or burn, you reject our second mode of decision which appeals to reason, and admit the first mode, that of classifying the individuals who may, and those who may not worship it, and say that, unable to comprehend the omnipresent deity with your minds, you worship him under the form of an idol, and cheerfully submit to the obloquy which the shastras or men may cast on you, we say, the image must be exceedingly dear to you, when you, knowing with what contempt the shastras treat the ignorant, submit to all this obloquy in

order to establish your right to worship images Thus the shastras 'Those who do not the works commanded by the Vedas, the ignorant, those afflicted with the leprosy, and those who act according to their own inclinations, are unclean till death.' While, then, you possess the ability of comprehending the Supreme Being, why will you, through a fondness for idols, acknowledge yourselves ignorant? Is it not remarkable that if any one charge you with ignorance respecting the shastras, the affairs of government, or any other matter, you are ready to deprive him of life, since each esteems himself wiser than his neighbours in all these respects, but that when we touch on the worship of the Supreme Being, you say that your understanding is weak and limited, and you are incompetent to the worship of the Supreme Being on account of its difficulty? Yet, if you weigh the subject, you will find that there is nothing attended with more difficulty than the worship of images, which you daily practise You deem an inanimate image possessed of perception, you offer food to one who has not the power of eating, you endeavour, by offering odoriferous flowers, to gratify one who has not the power of smelling You consider an image of earth or stone as possessed of divinity, hence in winter you clothe it with warm garments to prevent the cold from affecting it, in summer you fan it, and through fear of musquitoes place it beneath curtains at night What can be more difficult than to regard a being as possessed of divinity and at the same time as devoid of divinity? Yet, owing to constant practice from your childhood, the difficulty does not strike you just as jugglers by constant practice are able to perform the most difficult exploits with the utmost ease "

The doctrine which the author here combats, is universally current among the Hindoos They believe that

while the carpenter is fashioning it, the image is indeed a block of wood, but that as soon as the brahmin, whose office it is, repeats certain formulas inviting the deity to enter it, the image ceases to be wood, the divinity has now made it his residence, and all its former qualities have at once disappeared. Thus our author terms, the act of invocation, and combats it with much force in the

image which has not the power of sight, or motion, or perception, for a son, or for wealth, or for deliverance from disease, and attempt to bribe this dead mass of matter into a compliance with his wishes?—What can be more ridiculous than this? and yet, though you perceive how many who offer these bribes never obtain the fulfilment of their wishes, you continue this system of bribery and worship in spite of the expense and the labour

“Should you urge, that many who have petitioned the image, have obtained their desires, and that many who have despised celebrated images, have been visited with the severest afflictions, we reply, that though many who have prayed to the image have been successful in their pursuits, yet many have been equally successful who never petitioned an image. Our success or failure depends upon the will of the Almighty. Success, moreover, can never be separated from endeavours, which excludes the interposition of the images. We daily see into what a state of anxiety the worshippers of images are plunged, lest its hands or feet should at any time break! Now if they were convinced that the divinity had actually entered the idol, its worshippers would not be so incessantly anxious on this account. If images of great celebrity had power to destroy those who injured them,—if the idol punished the rats who undermine it or the cockroaches who destroy its colour, or if it drove off and punished the flies, who, after wading through slime and filth, walk over it, we should be the first to believe in its divinity”

The author next encounters one of the most popular doctrines in the Hindoo system, that the worship of images is permitted to the ignorant, and although he does not meet it on the ground which a person would have done who was well acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, that there is one law for the ignorant and the

wise, and that if any man lack wisdom, he has only to ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, he still applies the scourge of ridicule so powerfully on his own principles, that it must be felt by those who perhaps would have turned with fastidious contempt from the volume of Divine Revelation

“ If you ask, If the image possess no divinity or power, upon what principle have the shastras permitted even the ignorant to worship it? We reply, that the ignorant who, on beholding the regular order of the creation, the extraordinary appearances of nature, or the exquisite formation of the human body, cannot conceive that the omniscient and omnipresent God is the origin of all and the creator of the world, are unable to worship him and to perform the duties of life. Lest these men, plunged in atheism, should fill the world with wickedness, the shastras, to retain them in the simplicity of children, have ordained that, according to their several inclinations, they should, with the hope of reward, worship images, beasts, birds, trees, rivers, &c. which are evident to the senses, and may be easily grasped by the understanding. ‘ For those who are thus ignorant, who can be moved only by sordid rewards, and who are unable to form an idea of deity, the shastras have appointed rewards ’ In the days of childhood they amuse themselves with little images, with offerings of dust, and with little playthings, in the same spirit, at a mature age and when old, they delight themselves with larger images, with larger offerings of rice, and with larger stones, and like children are constantly engaged in such employments, and in the numerous festivals of the ritual. Like children, they present sweet-scented flowers to a stone image which has not the power of smelling, they play on musical instruments before an image that cannot hear, and presenting excellent food to

an image that has not the power of tasting, shew it the 'way to eat' Like little children they put the food to its mouth, they hold up a light in the evening to its eyes, incapable of seeing; and at stated festivals throwing themselves upon the ground, make gambols for its gratification On some occasions the father, sons, brothers, and elder relatives, assembling themselves before it, indulge in the most indecent language, and disgrace themselves by the most licentious gestures, unrestrained by the presence of their own or their neighbours' female relatives On other occasions, placing the image on a boat, they indulge themselves in licentiousness without restraint "

The author in his next attack, evidently, though perhaps unintentionally, undermines the doctrine that Spirit equally pervades all things, while he is exposing the absurdity of there being many gods If the Hindoo system of idolatry did not originate in the doctrine that all things are equally pervaded by Spirit or deity, this doctrine cannot long exist after idolatry is exploded — The idea so current among the Hindoos that all sins are merely the diversion of the gods, a doctrine fraught with every immorality, is also exposed with much ability in the following paragraphs

" If the defenders of images say, ' we worship not the image, the images are only the representations of different gods,—those gods are without birth and death, and are the eternal and omniscient *Brumha*,' we ask whether *all* these gods be the almighty *Brumha* ? or only one of them ? for both these positions are not tenable If you regard them all as omnipotent *Brumhas*, you overturn the *Vedas*, which constantly maintain that there is only one *Brumha* If you say, that there are many separate *Brumhas*, this is contrary to reason, since whether there be five or ten *Brumhas*, they must all have the power of

the ghost under the weapons of hunters [*Krishna*], one of them lost his teeth by a slap [*Soorya*], and is to this day toothless, and as such receives sacrifices of soft and delicate provisions, some have died by a curse, and others of grief, for proofs of which, search the *Muhabharata* and the *Pooranas*. We see that we men are subject to similar calamities. As the Eternal Spirit resides in these gods, so he resides also in men. Thus 'all the world is *Brahma*,' and in reality all creation is one. According to this testimony, *Brahma* resides in men as well as in gods, why then do you call the gods *Brahma*, and refuse that title to men and all other creatures?

"If you say, that birth, death, the passions, anger, desire, jealousy, insensibility, ignorance, are the mere diversion of the gods, who are originally free from these things, we reply, that the Spirit of both men and gods is separate from passion, but by its assuming a body subject to birth, death, and actions, these attributes are erroneously ascribed to Spirit, the gods then, like other beings, have bodies and all the contingencies of bodies. Now if the undisputed birth, death, decapitation, anger, jealousy, lust, &c. of the gods be mere diversion, why may we not view these accidents in the same light with regard to men? for if we judge rightly, the whole world is but delusion and diversion. To regard the desires, and sorrows, and griefs, of one body as mere diversion, and the desires, griefs, and sorrows of another as real, is manifestly inconsistent.

"If you urge, that the gods have performed actions which men could not perform, hence their being subject to birth and death is undoubtedly mere diversion, we reply, we learn from *Jumudugnee*, that as the shastras have given the gods a suppositious name and form, so with the idea of inculcating duties and works, they have,

under the semblance of history, affixed to them those deeds which are equally suppositious, ' gods with forms are suppositiously represented as men or women ' But if their form is suppositious, the actions they perform are equally suppositious! Further, as the gods are said to have performed miraculous actions, so also have men, as *Ugustya*, *Junhoo*, *Vushisht'ha*, *Junuka*, &c performed deeds equally miraculous, as the *Pooranas* record Is the subjection of these men to birth and death, then, mere diversion, and are they also *Brumhas*? If you support your worshipping idols by the great advantages which you say kings and sages have obtained from them, we reply, that gods, and sages, and kings, in former times, worshipped and meditated on the Supreme Being, and that the gods and sages were upon an equality They assisted the gods in their sacrifices, and the gods returned the favour, they were sometimes on terms of peace and sometimes at war with the gods, as proofs of which take the loss of *Gunesha's* tooth,—*Indra's* being forsaken of *Lukshmee*,—*Vishnoo's* being kicked by *Bhrigoo*,—the destruction of the race of *Judoo*,—the death of *Krishna* by an arrow,—and *Shiva's* being rendered insensible, all which is related in the *Pooranas* If the sages had regarded them as the Eternal Deity, they would not, on such trifling occasions, have broken the teeth of one, kicked another, and destroyed the race of a third Again, while one *Poorana* has described some idol or being as God, and has conferred on him all the attributes of deity by giving him the power of creating, preserving, and destroying, and representing him as worthy of regard from gods, kings, and sages, in another *Poorana*, this very being, thus endowed, is described as serving and worshipping another of the gods, who is, in his turn, invested with all the attributes of deity —In real fact, the sages

in common with the gods, worshipped one Supreme Being, they were upon an equality with the gods, and in relation to them, were consecutively the worshippers and the worshipped. If the gods pleased them, they bestowed gifts on them, if the gods displeased them, they cursed them. This is fully laid open in your books "

The writer next advances an argument which militates in the strongest manner against the antiquity of the present Pauranic system of idolatry,—that the ancient sages bore no names formed from those of the Hindoo gods now worshipped, while there is now scarcely a name given to a child which has not a reference to some one of these gods. This complete alteration of names throughout this vast empire, may suggest a hint, which, if duly pursued, may lead to a knowledge of the period when the system of idol worship was introduced. None of Krishna's contemporaries, in the war of the Pandavas (the subject of the *Mahabharata*), seem to have borne the names of any Hindoo god, and in the reign of Vikramaditya, not eighteen hundred years ago,—of the nine most celebrated writers in his court, often termed the nine jewels, not one bore any of the names now in use. At present every native in Bengal is called after some god, and so far does he carry this folly, that if possible, in naming his child, he invariably introduces the name of some god who had before no existence in the family nomenclature. In a native's opinion, the oftener he repeats or hears the name of a god the better, hence he calls his son after his deities, and also teaches his parrot to pronounce their names.

" Further, if those sages had, like you, been in the habit of worshipping gods invested with bodies subject to birth and death, they would have been named after the gods

they worshipped, in the same manner as you are. But none of them were called *Hiree-churuna*, *Krishna-churuna*, *Netree-dasa*, *Choitunya-churuna*, &c according to the names now in use, though in the *Mahabharata* and other books we have numerous names of ancient sages and kings, such as *Purasura*, *Vyasa*, *Sooka*, *Gubheela*, *Doorvasa*, *Sandilya*, *Kushyupa*, *Ugusta*, *Poulustya*, *Kooroo*, *Pooroo*, *Bharata*, *Rughoo*, *Pandoo*, *Yoodist'hira*, &c &c all of which have not the slightest reference to the names of idols.

"If you say, that by worshipping these idols and the gods they represent, many have obtained power to destroy and annihilate,—to influence others,—to revive the dead,—to give children to the barren and wealth to the indigent, and that these miracles have not ceased even at the present day, hence their divinity is unquestionable, we reply, if an impostor with long locks of hair, a long mark across his forehead, his eyes turned upward like the gods, and making gestures of the hand and feet to resemble them, should visit a person so ignorant as to esteem a stone, a lump of earth, or a tree of the forest, a god, it would not be astonishing if such an impostor should be considered as supernaturally endowed. These palm themselves on the ignorant as endowed with divinity, and acquainted both with the past and with the future, but the victims of their delusion see not what passes in the houses and neighbourhood of these hypocrites! Are they able by a word or a charm to remove the diseases or the poverty with which they themselves are afflicted, with their followers and friends? When these impostors appear before men of sense and judgment, their villainy is detected, and meets with due chastisement. Do you not perceive that in Calcutta and its

vicinity, where there are more sensible men than elsewhere, the villainy of these impostors finds little or no encouragement? For the same reason, reputed deliverances from the power of wizards and spirits, are fewer in Calcutta, than in *Vishnoo-poorā*, the eastern parts of Bengal, and Assam, where the ignorant abound. There, the power of spirits and wizards is acknowledged in every house. A proof may be easily made of these characters reputed holy by the image-worshipper. Let one of them try his power in our presence, and we will quickly settle this matter. You yourselves acknowledge that neither *Brumha*, *Vishnoo*, nor *Shiva*, can disturb the established order of things, and yet you believe that these reputed saints can destroy the living, and prevent the sun from rising! God has given you a human form, why will you not reason and act like men? It is difficult for any man to believe that a mere mortal can reverse the order of things established by God. Can you not perceive, that those who are more ignorant than yourselves worship, and on every occasion pray for assistance to, various images which even you despise? Thus women and the lower orders, in addition to worshipping those acknowledged images which you adore, worship *Shushtee*, *Makala*, *Kaloo-rayā*, *Dukshina-rayā*, *Ola-bebee**, and others. Now on the same principle that you despise many of the images which they worship, would you also, if you judged aright, despise the images you now hold in the highest repute.

“ If you say that in the shastras *Gunesha* and four other

* “ *Ola-beebie*,” this goddess has been created within these four years, she is indebted for her origin to the prevalence of the Cholera morbus.

gods are pronounced to be *Brumha*, them we therefore worship, we reply, that in the shastras not only are these five, but many others considered as *Brumha*, and in fact so is the whole world. Thus the wind is called *Brumha* in the *Vedas*, 'Thou also art *Brumha* himself' The mind is also considered as *Brumha*, and directed to be worshipped as such. 'Worship the mind as *Brumha*' Food is also *Brumha*. 'food is *Brumha*' Even a servant, and the wicked are *Brumha*. 'a servant is *Brumha*, the wicked are *Brumha*' In another place *Guroora* is considered as *Brumha*, 'Thou art the Lord of all things moveable and immoveable' Why then do you esteem the omnipresent *Brumha* as residing alone in *Gunesha* and the other four gods, and not in five hundred, or in the whole creation?"

The author now attacks the current maxim, that they ought ever to follow their fathers, and evidently shews that this is a mere pretence, as they in reality do this no farther than they think it attended with profit or honour. It is no less amusing than ingenious for him to impress our own countrymen into his service here, by shewing that *Mlechas*, alias Europeans, while attending these idolatrous festivals, are really undermining the whole system. This is a work of supererogation few of those dream of performing who attend them.

"If you say, whether the worship of idols be consonant with reason and the shastras or not, we must follow the practice of our forefathers, we reply, that it is singular you should adduce the authority of your ancestors when desirous of diverting yourselves with your idols, while with regard to the things of this world, or the next, you scarcely ever act in conformity with their example. We see thousands whose ancestors were virtuous and

learned, but whose posterity, disregarding the practice of their forefathers, are become secular and the servants of *Mlechas*. If among these any acquire great wealth, he is considered as the ornament of his race. When did ever your ancestors procure dancing girls in the time of the *Doorga-pooja*, or invite *Mlechas* and feed them, which many of you now consider honourable? At the time of other festivals many have *Hindoost'hance* dancing girls, when did your ancestors thus? The forefathers of some of you served the images in various families on a monthly salary, their sons now will scarcely receive a *Shoodra*. Many of your ancestors were *Shaktas*, and even *Bamacharees*,* their children are now the followers of *Vishnoo*, and of *Choitunya*, many of your ancestors were *Voishnavas*, and their children are now *Shaktas*, many of them never worshipped *Doorga*, yet their children omit neither the worship of *Doorga*, nor of any other deity. Many of your ancestors sold their daughters, but their children having now become wealthy, have affianced their daughters to *Koolins*, and are become pre-eminently noble. Hence it appears that you are constantly acting in opposition to the practice of your forefathers, and that you cover yourselves with the shield of their authority, only on the subject of idol worship.—If you say, that the son who, instead of selling his daughter like his forefathers, marries her into a respectable family, or who, instead of omitting the worship of *Doorga* like his forefathers, worships that goddess, is worthy of honour, since he follows the *shastras*, and that his practice is not

* The *Shaktas* are the followers of *Doorga*, the *Bamacharees* are a division of that sect, but carry the gratification of the senses to an unlimited extent, under the hope, rather under the pretence, of extinguishing them by satiety.

the worse for not having the sanction of his forefathers, we ask how you can acknowledge that son worthy of honour who discontinues such practices of his ancestors as were opposed to the shastras, and at the same time affirm that whatever your ancestors have done ought to be perpetuated and not discontinued? If the commands of the shastras ought to be fulfilled although your ancestors neglected them, it remains for you to say, why you neglect the worship of the Supreme Deity, which all the shastras have universally commanded, because your ancestors neglected it,—you have to give a reason why, forsaking the worship of the Supreme God, which is commanded in the Vedas, the Pooranas, the Smritees, and the Tantras, you foolishly spend your time in worshipping idols ”

The next argument adduced, is wholly of a native complexion. No Christian can allow that those deceived by false teachers are themselves guiltless. If the spiritual watchman blow not the trumpet to warn men of the approaching enemy, these perish in their iniquity, although their blood is required at the watchman's hand. The manner in which he ridicules their blind attachment to the follies of their ancestors, however, is highly ingenious, and such as would scarcely have occurred to a European.

“ If you say that your neglecting to worship the Supreme Spirit according to the rules of the shastras, does not entail future misery, and urge, Have not our ancestors, who neglected this worship, obtained beatitude after death? We reply, that their worshipping idols did not subject them to punishment, because they were led into that error by pundits who sought their own advantage, and expected superior profit from extolling the worship of idols, and hence concealing from them the opinions of the Oopuni-

shuds and the chief Shastras, led them to believe that every thing was to be secured by worshipping images — Why will you not perceive, that if Vyasa and other sages had really worshipped any gods with hands and feet, they would not have represented them in the Pooranas and other works in so contemptible a light, nor have described them as subject to the will of others? They worshipped the Supreme Being, the Supreme Being therefore is alone worthy of worship. Were a sheep to fall into the stream of a river, or into a well, all the other sheep would follow the same course and perish. Now, if we asked these sheep the cause of their disaster, and they possessed the power of reason and speech, they would say, that God had not bestowed on them the power of judging between good and evil, hence when they perceived the leading sheep fall into the stream, they naturally followed him, though to the loss of their lives. In the same manner, if a young camel who by eating thorns had made its mouth bloody, were asked the reason of his conduct, and he possessed capacity and speech, he would reply, that he had seen his ancestors eat thorns and bleed, and that he followed their example, because God had not given him the power to judge respecting good or evil. But when a human being, to whom God has given the faculty of discerning right and wrong, voluntarily enters on the performance of actions which are ridiculous in this world, and punishable in the next, that is to say, when he snaps his fingers, dances, swells his cheeks, slaps his arms, and in the midst of his devotion practises pugilism and sings indecent songs which ought never to be heard, and considers all these actions as conducive to his salvation,—when he dishonours the Deity by representing him as adulterous, thievish, deceitful, lascivious, passionate, and avaricious, and, unable to give a reason on the subject, contents himself with the reasoning

of the sheep and the camel, that he follows the practice of his forefathers, what can be more distressing? Does not this reduce men to a level with beasts?

“Should you insist on acting according to your own wills, and say, Why do you trouble yourselves on the subject, and repeat your admonitions?—we reply, that it is natural for men to feel sorrow when they behold the miseries of others. When, therefore, we see the distress which you voluntarily inflict on yourselves, we feel sorrow, and under the impression of these feelings think it right to warn you. We sometimes see you both young and old acting like children. Children offer food and a couch to a little plaything,—you both young and old offer food to an idol, and delight yourselves with the idea of eating what you pretend he has left. When we, moreover, see you marry a male to a female idol, ought we not to feel sorrow? Before the goddess whom you esteem your mother you indulge in the most licentious conversation,—in the most licentious dances,—dances which you would feel ashamed to practise in the presence even of the most abandoned. You hire others to sing the most disgusting songs in presence of the object of religious veneration and of the female members of your own family, and cause the singers to perform dances before them which excite all the evil passions of the mind, would these unworthy actions ever receive the sanction of a man of true sense? and ought we not to feel pity when we see them sanctioned by men otherwise respectable? You at your various festivals anoint the feet, the hands, and the whole body, with dirt and red paint, or with blood, and wrestle and combat with the fist, and jump about in the very presence of your deities, with a view of securing salvation, actions which are scarcely decent in the presence of men. When therefore we see

these unmanly actions, ought we not to feel shame? You dress out another person in the form of that very god whom you regard as infinitely superior to your father, and cause him to dance before you, and introduce other characters for your pastime. Whether this worship partakes of the nature of faith, or of ridicule, judge for yourselves. When in matters relative to religion we see such burlesque and falsehood, ought we not to feel pity?—Again, with the view of their obtaining Gunga*, you at midnight, in the month of January, dip your aged and afflicted parents in the river, and thereby murder them. The weather is then so cold and the wind so bleak, that were you to submerge a healthful youth in the river, his death would be no matter of surprise. Promising heaven to your elder or younger sister, to your mother, or grandmother, or daughter, or friend, you bind them down with ropes and bamboos, and burn them on the funeral pile. When we witness the perpetration of these murders, does not nature itself move us to forbid them? Considering the Ganges as washing away sins, women visit it both at night and by day under circumstances of the highest indelicacy. Many of the images whose power is celebrated and whose abode in the house is considered a protection from evil, are stolen by thieves, and either sold, or, if composed of metal, melted down for the sake of the gold and silver. Now the worshippers of these idols must feel shame, when the stealing or melting down of their gods is known yet when unable to detect the robbers, they subject the innocent brahmans in attendance to insult and punishment, thereby injuring

* “Obtaining Gunga,” a phrase used by the natives to express a man’s obtaining those benefits in a future state which they imagine Gunga can bestow

themselves both in this world and the next from all which it appears that the worshippers of images are exposed to ridicule in this world, as well as to punishment in the world to come. If you say, 'The Christians worship the deity, without forming images, and your system resembles theirs; we are Hindoos, we therefore naturally worship the deity through an image,' we reply, that there are two kinds of Christians, the English and others who never admit images into their churches, and the Feringhees who exceed them in numbers and whose churches are crowded with images. If then, by forsaking idols, we assimilate our system to that of the English Christians, you must acknowledge that by your worshipping images your system resembles that of the Feringhee Christians. Can you esteem this honourable?

"If you demand proof that *Brahma* created the world, we say, that both you and we unite in acknowledging that God is the Creator of the world. All the *Shastras* acknowledge this, and, with the exception of atheists, no one questions the fact. What need then of proof for a position which we all acknowledge? Should any one ask what biped is endowed with reason, the reply would immediately be, man, and no proof would be necessary. In addition to this you say, that *Krishna*, *Shiva*, and other idol gods, are God, the Creator of the world, this you must prove either from the *shastras*, or from reason. Now it is contrary to reason, that any being invested with hands and feet, should be the Creator of the world, since it is evident that every being thus constituted, must be subject to destruction, and a being subject to destruction cannot be God. If you attempt to bring proof from the *shastras*, and say, that in the *Shree-bhagavata* *Krishna* is called God, to this we reply, that the *Shree-bhagavata* calls *Krishna*, God, so the *Kalca*

poorana calls Kalee, God, the *Shiva*-poorana says the same of *Shiva*, the *Shama*-poorana the same of *Soorya*, and the *Tantras* the same of the ten wise men¹. And as the *Shree-bhaguvata* attributes almighty power to *Vishnoo*, the other *Pooranas* equally attribute omnipotent power to their heroes. How then can we avoid the conclusion, that *Vishnoo* is God and all the others no gods? That all these should be separate and independent deities, is contrary both to the *shastras* and to reason, for there can be but one Creator. And to the idea that they are all one, we have replied in a former page, that if those who have different situations, colours, forms, &c are one, why may not the whole creation be one? If you say, that since the *Shastras* have called *Huree-hura* one,* we regard them as one; we reply, that the *Shastras* regard the whole world as one and the same, 'He views the whole creation as one'. The reason of thus esteeming all things as one, is this, that all the world exists by dependence on the one Being, just as by the reflection of one sun a thousand images are produced. By establishing the unity of God, the whole world therefore, as presenting reflected images of him, is thus esteemed one. If you say, that unless the gods were all one, the various *Shastras* would not have exhibited the various gods as *Brumha*, we have before particularly replied to this question in saying, that it is not the gods alone who are called *Brumha*, but food, the mind, beasts, birds, &c yea even the whole world. But we are to receive this as a proof that *Brumha* is omnipresent, not that each one of these things is really *Brumha* himself. If you say, that

* "Huree-hura one" Huree is *Vishnoo*, and *Hura*, *Shiva* common decency forbids the insertion of the story given in the *shastras* as the occasion of their being thus termed one

the books relating to Krishna are to be regarded as true, we reply, that as in the books relating to Shiva their own excellency is maintained, so in the books which extol Vishnoo, those very books are extolled. In the Pooranas, the Pooranas are extolled, in the Tantras, the Tantras, and in fact it is said at the end of each Poorana, that it is superior to all the other Pooranas. But this is mere flattery. one writer composed all the Pooranas, hence all the Pooranas are authorities. If his opinions are false in one place, what proof is there that they are true in another? Wherefore to extol one Poorana, and to depress another, is contrary to righteousness."

The following reply to the common objection, that God, from being incomprehensible, cannot be worshipped without some intervening object, carries with it considerable weight, if it be not perfectly satisfactory.

"If you say, how can those who worship Brahma, worship him without some specific object of worship?—We reply, when we see this earth and our bodies formed so rationally, that man alone could never have accomplished it, we acknowledge the work of an omnipotent and omniscient God, and by attending to, and meditating on, and regarding him, we obtain our desires. Since the world and our bodies are so curiously and admirably formed, of which each part and member has its separate use and employment, they could not have been formed but by an Almighty Being. A proof of this you may find in common life, an astonishing production of art, such as a watch, could not have been formed suddenly without an intelligent cause. whenever we therefore see a work of great magnitude and skill, we conclude that its creator must have possessed proportionable power and skill, but we do not, like you, form in our minds or by our hands a suppositious image with hands and feet, and like chil-

dren spend our time in foolishly endeavouring to please this imaginary being

“ If you say, that although from the form of the world and of our bodies it is manifest that there is one universal Creator, yet as you know not his form, you cannot come to a determination of the subject, we reply, that as it appears evident from the motions and desires of the body that there is a spirit pervading the whole frame, by which *I* and *mine* are known, and by which a knowledge of things is produced—and yet we know not the form of this spirit, so, from the formation and regular motion of the earth, it is certain that there is one great universal omnipotent Cause, but we know not how it exists. In the same manner, there are many other things, such as time, the atmosphere, &c. which you yourselves acknowledge to exist, and yet no one can tell how they exist. The same reasoning will apply in the present instance. There can be no doubt of the existence of a God, it is also certain, that if we search for his form by ascertaining what *He is not*, the deity will be found to be incomprehensible by language or by the mind

“ Should you add, ‘ we also acknowledge that the deity is incomprehensible by language or by the mind, hence a being who is thus incomprehensible, cannot be worshipped, we therefore recognize the deity under different forms ’—We reply that if any one in infancy had been taken away by another nation, and, unable to discover his father, was yet desirous of performing a Shraddha in honour of him, he would not, with the view of completing his Shraddha, invoke beasts, birds, &c. as the representatives of his father, he would invoke man the author of his being. Let the same rule be applied to the Deity it is impossible to discover how the deity exists, but we ought to worship him by meditating on

him as the Creator of the world and the Regulator of human affairs. This hearing and meditating is the worship of the Supreme Being. But to say, 'Come, sit down, receive vestments and this ring, smell this flower, partake of this food, depart,' this amusement, which you call worship, is indeed the worship of idols, but not the worship of the Supreme Being."

The following arguments, tending to shew that religion does indeed belong to householders and men in secular callings, are quite appropriate. The contrary idea, from which every Christian country is not quite free, reigns throughout Hindoostan, and is, to the brahmuns and religious mendicants, a never-failing source of profit.

"If you say, that the worship of the omnipresent deity is commanded by the Vedas, but that it does not come within the province of us householders, we reply, that this objection is contrary both to the Shastras and to reason, since in the Vedas and in the Smritees of Munoo, Yagyuvalkya, &c. and in the Tantras and other Shastras, the worship of the Supreme Being is expressly commanded to all householders. In the *Vrhadarunya-Oopunishud* it is said that both *Indra* and *Virochuna* obtained divine knowledge from *Bruhman*. In the *Mundak-Oopunishud* you see that *Sunaka*, though incumbered with a family, acquired divine knowledge from *Ungeera*. In the *Chundagya* you find that *Junushrotee* a king, and *Setoo*, *Ketoo*, *Goutama*, *Junuka* and others, though immersed in worldly affairs, constantly worshipped the Supreme Being. It is also contrary to reason, since in this as in other divisions of men, there are both wise and ignorant. In order to prevent ignorant householders from falling into sin, they have been instructed to worship idols, but for the wise the worship of the Supreme Being is appointed. Thus we see that householders are not

excluded from the worship of the Supreme Being. It is evident that those who seek our wealth, encourage the idea that householders have nothing to do with the worship of the Supreme Being, the reason of which advice is evident, householders are in general rich, and spiritual guides derive more pecuniary advantage from leading them to the worship of idols than to that of the Supreme Being. For the gifts of ornaments and vestments to the idol, of the sacrificial food and the morning and evening sacrifice, are perquisites exclusively enjoyed by them. On specific days of worship additional food is offered to the idol,—on the fulfilling of vows,—on charming away disease,—when repeating *Jupa*, and on various other occasions, much is expended for the idol, the whole of which passes into the hands of these wealth-seeking priests. Hence the more householders are buried in the worship of the idols, the more the gains of the pundit are increased. Men for the sake of gain will even murder on the highway, and these wealth-seeking brahmuns deceive householders for their own advantage. What difference is there between these two characters?"

There is some reason to suppose that in this argument our writer has been led beyond his depth otherwise we must acknowledge that the practice of the various kings and sages he has enumerated, must have been at variance with the doctrines they professed. After reading the following description of a true *Brumhugyanee* or a worshipper of the Supreme Being, it is difficult to imagine how any man engaged in secular affairs, and surrounded with his family and friends, could attain this divine knowledge, which is the last stage in this nether world, and the vestibule to final beatitude. "He who in the body has obtained emancipation, is of no cast, of no sect, of no order, attends to no duty, adheres to no *Shastras*, to no formulas,

to no works of merit, he leaves the net of secular affairs as the lion his toils, he is beyond the reach of speech, he remains at a distance from all secular concerns, he has renounced the love and the knowledge of sensible objects, he is glorious as the autumnal sky, he flatters none, he honours none, he is not worshipped, he worships not — *Sankhya-Sara*” This widely differs from the doctrine of our writer, who allows his worshipper of *Brahma* a sceptre, and a crown, a wife and children, and a long train of friends. This discrepancy in the *Shastras* may however easily be settled by our author’s second rule in these matters, that of receiving the doctrine most agreeable to reason, on which subject there can be no hesitation.

“ If you say that without purity of mind it is impossible to find out the deity, have all of you obtained purity or integrity of mind that you seek to find out the deity ?” We reply, that without possessing integrity of mind, no man would be induced to worship the deity, since the *Shastras* have said, that this is necessary to lead men to the worship of the deity. When therefore we see any one worshipping the deity, we are to conclude that he has attained integrity of mind. Indeed, integrity of mind is obtained in the very act of adoration; we therefore have adopted the worship of the Supreme Being.

ble.' Now we ask which of the worshippers of idols is possessed of these qualities? Should you say, that as we possess none of the holiness which appertains to the worshippers of the deity, it is vain to call ourselves the followers of *Brahma*; we reply, that it is one of our principles to consider the deity as omnipresent and as witnessing all our actions, and that we endeavour as much as possible to adhere to this principle, and avoid injuring ourselves or others and that we hope by degrees, through experience and exertion, to attain perfection in these observances. But you do not perform one millionth part of what is commanded for the worship of idols. You are commanded to preserve a perpetual fire. Who does this? Brahmuns are commanded to perform a daily sacrifice—to bathe every morning—daily to perform a *Shraddha*—to perform *Sundhya*,—to pronounce the *Gayatree* with the meaning—to perform perpetual *Japa*—to perform *vrita*—to fast—to be particular in food, and not to have the least connection with *Mlechas* and the lower casts. To which of these rules do you adhere? Beside these, there are endless regulations for the *Shaktas*, the *Shoivyas*, and the *Voishnavas*, which none of you perform. While therefore you yourselves do not adhere in the smallest degree to your own regulations, how can you ridicule others who may neglect some portion of their duty?

The "perpetual fire" alludes to the following rule, every brahmun is directed to keep alive to the day of his death, the fire used in sacrifice on his investiture with the *pota*, that it may be employed in reducing him to ashes. This is rather an expensive ordinance, it is true,—but still it is commanded in the *Shastras*, which have not, however, told us how the man who is too poor to keep a servant, is to attend to the fire and his secular employment at the same time. Some in the higher walks of life have

done this In the family of Rajah Krishna-Chundra-*raya* one fire has now been burning for seventy years, and we hear it has not yet been suffered to go out It has served three generations in the manner above, described It is however kept in a distinct house, and has a regular establishment of priests to keep it perpetually alive

“ If you say, ‘ that although you worship the deity in one form, and we worship him in another, both modes of worship are right, and we shall therefore both obtain our wishes what proof then is there that one is right and the other wrong ?’—We reply, that we worship the Deity as the Creator of the world, and whoever may possess this power and wisdom, *Him* we worship, we shall therefore of course be successful Even according to your own opinion, we run no risk, since if *Kalee*, or *Vishnoo*, or *Shiva*, or any one else, be the Creator of the world, our worship will not be fruitless Just as though we should send a letter by post to the King of *Kashee* (Benares), *our* letter will reach him whoever he may be, but if the name of any individual be mentioned who should not happen to be the king of *Kashee*, the letter will be returned This simile will apply on the present occasion in different systems, different individuals are called the Creator of the world, the matter being thus doubtful, *you* mention the name of one specific individual as the Creator of the world, and worship him, now if he should not happen to be the Creator of the world, your worship will be fruitless,—but ours will not be so

“ Should you further urge, that whether idols with hands and feet be the Creator of the world or not, if we worship them in faith, our worship will not be fruitless, since faith is the root of all worship, we reply, that this reasoning is vain, since the efficacy of faith cannot alter the power of any thing. Thus if we partake of milk

mixed with poison under the idea of its being milk, it will not produce the effect of milk, but of poison, and will destroy him who partakes of it. If a child or a fly should take a liking to fire and touch it, the fire, contrary to this belief, will certainly burn them. 'We might produce a thousand similar instances to prove that faith cannot alter the qualities of things.' Hence to believe that any unstable thing is the origin of the world, and to worship it as such, will not render it the Creator of the world, nor will the worship thereby be rendered efficacious."

Our author now touches, but with a delicate hand, on that blind obedience to Gooroo's or teachers, for which his countrymen are so famous, and which, while an inexhaustible source of wealth to the brahmanic tribe, forms one of the strongest links of that chain by which the multitude are held in delusion.

"If you say, that the advice of a spiritual guide is binding, and that the efforts made in pursuance of his advice will be effectual, we reply, that he only is a true guide who gives advice according to the Shastras, since, with regard to the qualities of a guide, it is said that 'he who by means of the medicinal drug knowledge destroys the darkness of ignorance, and restores the faculty of sight, he is the true gooroo.' Wherefore let us first obtain a guide according to the Shastras, and we shall then see corresponding fruit from his advice. He who is ignorant of the meaning of knowledge, and instructs his disciples merely for the sake of gifts and of a quilt for the cold weather, leads them to sorrow and destruction. Hear the words of Muha-deva [Shiva], 'There are many guides who despoil their disciples of their wealth, but to find a guide who removes the grief of his disciple, is exceedingly difficult.' If we believe the advice of a guide who, according to the Shastras, leads us to faith in the

Supreme Being, our desires will doubtless be fulfilled, but if one blind man instruct another blind man, they will both fall into destruction.* Hear the Mundook Oopu-mshud 'when an ignorant gooroo instructs his disciple, they both become blind' The Shastras direct, that a gooroo shall receive a gift from his disciple once after giving him instruction, but to our astonishment we see gifts bestowed *frequently* during the year, sometimes to perform pooja, sometimes for the investiture of a son, and sometimes for marriages. The guide tells the disciple for his comfort, that a disciple and a son are equally dear, but we never see the wealth of the guide's son bestowed on the disciple, we see the wealth of the disciple

tering supposition, you commit sin without fear, depending on the efficacy of your devotion, and yet you confess, that Yoodhist'hna having once uttered a falsehood, though he afterwards bathed constantly in the Ganges, pronounced the names of the gods, and performed the sacrifice of the horse, was yet obliged to undergo the torments of hell to destroy that sin By this worship of beings with forms, the mind is constantly defiled and sin committed. If you adduce the authority of the Pooranas for these forms of worship, we reply, that though they are commanded in the Pooranas, yet they are in those very books said to be delusive By esteeming falsehood as truth, why then do you destroy yourselves both in this world and the next? We have spoken more at large on this subject in the first chapter."

In the following paragraphs, an objection is met which greatly weighs with the Hindoos, that the renunciation of idol worship would abolish those distinctions as to food, &c which distinguish one cast from another. The proper answer to this is, that these distinctions are worse than useless, and that no moral defilement is caused by that which entereth the mouth, since it is that alone which cometh forth from the heart, which defileth the man To this extent, however, our author does not yet seem prepared to go Still, his answer is ingenious, and he justly reproves his countrymen for their unworthy treatment of Ram-mohun-roy

"Should you say, that we, who are seeking divine knowledge, ought not to make any distinction with regard to food or outward actions, we reply, that there is indeed one omnipresent *Brahma*, and that upon his existence depends the existence of the world But while we retain an existence among any of the ranks of creatures, that is to say, while we recognize a brass

water-pot as a water-pot, and a mat as a mat, while we are unable to perform the functions of one of the senses by means of another, we must use a water-pot as a water-pot, a mat as a mat, we must see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and 'make a distinction according to the Shastras in our food and actions, and act in conformity with our national customs. Just as any five servants of one Lord, when diverting themselves, support different characters, one assuming the part of a king, another that of a counsellor, a third that of an officer of justice, a fourth that of a subject, and a fifth sustaining the character of a priest. While the diversion lasts, they receive the respect attached to their respective characters, though at the same time they know themselves to be servants of one Lord. In the same manner are we all situated, and, though we live in one Supreme Being, we yet comply with the innocent customs of our fellow-countrymen. Throughout the four *yogas* all those who worshipped *Bruhma* acted in this manner, of which we see examples in *Munoo*, *Yugya-valkya*, *Vyasa*, *Vushisht'ha*, *Purasura*, *Ut'hurva*, *Ungeera*, and other great sages. *Junuka* also, and *Sunuka*, and *Roikya* and others, all worshipped *Bruhma*, and were yet engaged in similar concerns and governed their respective kingdoms. — It is matter of great grief, that having determined not to acknowledge God as the Creator of the world, you are bent on acknowledging earth, stone, water, trees, kites*, and jackals as God, and to worship them as such and constantly encourage others to the same course, but if any one, beholding this your extreme ignorance, endeavours by rea-

* *Bhugavatee* on one occasion became a kite, and on another occasion a jackal, to lick up the blood of a giant whom she was anxious to destroy, and whose every drop of blood on reaching the ground produced fresh monsters.

son or by the *Shastras* to admonish you to worship God as God, instead of being grateful for his exertions, you become his enemy, and vilify him. Thus in a recent instance, when one translated the *Vedanta* into the popular dialect, that it might be better understood, you said of those who recognized the *Vedanta* as the true way, that they were the followers of such a person, that you might exclude them from your society, when you know that their system is sanctioned by the *Veda*, the *Vedanta*, the *Durshanas*, and *Smritees*, and all the *shastras*. The design of this was, by charging them with following a modern system, to induce them to discountenance it. But those who are wise, will certainly judge, that if any one were to translate the *Muhabharata*, or the *Ramayana*, into the Bengalee language, those books do not become his system."

The following arguments are peculiarly happy. Men never remain on the steps of a building, their design in ascending them is to enter the edifice. Those, however, who worship idols or images, never intend to leave them, the whole is mere pretence.—The doctrine of "the porter," which he afterwards combats, is sufficiently singular, and his argument against it is an overwhelming one. While it prostrates the Hindoo gods, it mows down all the Musulman peers, with Mahomet at their head—and all the host of mediators set up by the Romish church.

"Should you say, that works [the ceremonies of idol worship] are the first step to the worship of *Brahma*, just as a knowledge of the alphabet is necessary for the acquisition of the grammar, we reply, that he who applies to the alphabet intends, when he has finished it, to apply to the grammar, and ceases to bend his attention to the alphabet, after he has entered on the grammar. Men,

indeed, ascend the house by means of steps, but no one remains on the steps. You, however, act contrary to this, since you begin this elementary worship, which you compare to steps and the alphabet, at the age of ten, and continue it to the age of eighty, and forsake it not even in death. And though you have strength to seek out the Supreme Being, you will not exert it, and will dislike those who attempt to draw you to it. You pass your time in making various straight and crooked marks on your forehead, in imprinting various marks on your body, in carrying a load of wood on your neck [a mala or necklace], and believe that all these things will save you from death. This is a most useless mode of passing time; we therefore again entreat you earnestly to fix your belief on the omnipresent God, the creator of the world, and considering him as ever present with you, to refrain from all iniquity, and reject the opinion of those who for their own advantage would lead you to the worship of idols, and render you ridiculous in this world and miserable in the next.

“If you say, that you do not worship the gods as the Supreme Being, but as enabling you to approach the deity, just as we conciliate the porter when we wish to approach a king, we reply, that those who conciliate the porter for an introduction to a king, do not consider the porter as the king himself, yet you act thus, since you consider those whom you worship as God himself. Again, it is doubtless right to conciliate the porter when you wish to approach a king, because the porter is near the king and can give you access to him. But this simile will not apply in the present case, since the deity is a spirit universally existent, and is acquainted with all our thoughts, who therefore can be said to stand in so near a relation to the deity, that by conciliating him you may

obtain easier access to the Almighty? If you say, that the one God may be obtained by all, hence some have found him by knowledge, some by works, others by worshipping the gods, just as there are many ways by which one may approach a king, we reply, that to suppose the deity may be found in different ways, is contrary to the *Shastras*, since the deity cannot be found but through divine knowledge, a point which is universally maintained in the most direct manner in the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*. Thus, 'men can obtain deliverance only by a knowledge of the divine essence, for final deliverance there is no other path'. The works and the worship which the *Shastras* have recommended, are requisite only till the mind be capable of worshipping according to knowledge, with integrity of heart. But how can purity of heart be obtained by your mode of worship, which defiles the mind, and thereby prevents your finding the deity? Were the house of a king in the south, you might wander a million of years to the east without finding it?

"If you say, that both a knowledge of the deity and meditation on the gods are operations of the mind, both will therefore lead to the fulfilment of our wishes, we reply, the idea that God is the Author and Creator of the world, does not even wait for the meditation of our mind, thus, that a rope is a rope does not wait for confirmation till we have reflected on it, since those things that are certain require not the sanction of our meditation. In the same way, to suppose that any part of the destructible creation is the Creator of the world, is mere delusion, by recognizing the true Creator of the universe, men obtain their wishes. The way in which you meditate on the gods is, however, mere delusion, since you form in your minds first the head of the god, then you endow him with a mouth and nose, then you give him hands and feet, then garments,

a necklace and ornaments, you then form in your minds the idea of various offerings for him,—but the day you are busily employed, this imaginary deity has some of the members of his body wanting. Now, should any one speak, or should a thought of any other affair cross your mind while thus mentally engaged, the whole imaginary being is destroyed, and you have all the work to begin afresh. How often is this ideal image broken! and how often are you thus constrained to begin it anew, just as your conception of the idea of an absent individual or object is broken by your attention being diverted! What difference is there between this ideal creation of the god and of the man? You create the image in your mind, and in your mind you break it. you form the image with your hands and feet, and with your hands and feet you break it. This worship of an ideal being is a mere play of the imagination, you form it in your mind in any way you please, and yet solicit deliverance and the fulfilment of your wishes from a work of the destructible imagination! Hear the *Muhanirbana*, ‘If a being created by the imagination can give deliverance, then the man who dreams that he is a king, is indeed a king.’ There is no end to this delusion. Who can awaken men so deeply buried in darkness? Even the brute creation regard a fixed object as stable, they recognize a stone as a stone, water as water, and a beast as a beast. But how can any one pretend to despise the brute creation, and pride himself on his existence as a rational being, who regards a tree as God, and a stone as the Supreme Being, and water as deserving worship in lieu of the deity,—and, considering a jackal, a monkey, and other beasts as the representatives of the gods, as such worships them?”

This argument may need explanation. The shastras command that a Hindoo shall daily perform the worship of

his guardian deity, which is accomplished by shutting the eyes, and conceiving of the form of the deity, and then by an act of the mind offering to it flowers, food, or whatever else may strike his imagination. This easy and inexpensive mode of propitiating the deity, is perhaps the least disregarded of all the directions of the shastras.

“If you say, that all beings with forms are destructible, and that the deity is without form, how then can he create beings with forms, since a being without form can do nothing? we reply, that the wind, though imperceptible, is yet able to make progress, to raise various articles, and to do many things. The mind is universally acknowledged to be without form, and yet in a dream how many forms of elephants, &c. can it create? Can it, therefore, be matter of astonishment, that the immaculate deity should create the world? In the Veda, also, it is said, ‘We see the power of creation residing in beings that have no form,’ how then can it be matter of astonishment, that the almighty and immaculate God should by his will create the world? If you say, that as the Almighty *Bruhma* is able of his will to do all things, it is not matter of astonishment that he should voluntarily have assumed a form for a specific work, we reply, that *Bruhma* is indeed almighty to create the world, that is, the Deity is able to perform what others cannot, but he can never communicate to others the essential attributes of deity, his eternity, omniscience, creative power, freedom from change, immaculate purity, his equal government, together with the absence of all increase or diminution, &c. Were he to assume a form, he would lose these attributes, because, however great a being with form may be, he must be inferior to the quarters of the universe, to time, and to space, he would then lose his omnipresence. Moreover, as every being who can be seen is destructible, the Deity would

thus lose his eternity, and his state of perpetual tranquillity. Nor can a temporary and inferior being be omniscient. You yourselves allow that the deity can do all things by a volition of the mind, if so, he can destroy Urooras, and sustain the world at will, why then should it be necessary for him to assume a form for these purposes? Should you further urge, that the Voishnavas of the sect of Chaitanya maintain, that the splendour of *Brhmma* was manifest in the body of *Krishna* and *Gouranga*, we reply, that from *Brhmma* to the lowest reptile all are full of the deity, nor is a worm, or the splendour of the body of a worm, or *Krishna*, or the splendour of his body, different from the eternal spirit. But your position overturns itself, since you say, that *Krishna* was *the splendour* of *Brhmma*. *Krishna*, then, was not *Brhmma*, to worship him therefore would be useless. As the *Shastras* command us to worship God, it would be useless to worship a being who is not God.

“If you say, ‘the *Shastras* command us daily to perform *Sandhya** and all other enjoined ceremonies, none of which you perform,’ we reply, that we worship God either by repeating the triliteral particle and the *Gayutree*, or by hearing and reflecting on the *Oopunishuds*, &c. in the performance of which all other ceremonies are included. Thus the *Mundook* ‘Know only that one universal soul, and reject all other works.’ Thus *Munoo* ‘Forsaking all works commanded by the *Shastra*, labour to worship *Brhmma*, to restrain your passions, and to remember the triliteral particle and the *Oopunishuds*.’ And in securing purity of mind, we are not forbidden to regulate our passions, or to do those things required by our sta-

* Worship performed in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening

tions, or, the perpetual ceremonies commanded by the Shastras. But we ask you, Why do you neglect the worship of the Supreme Being which is commanded in so many Shastras? If you say, that in the worship of *Brūhma* there is no recognition of the six acts*, how then can men trust to it?—We reply, that it would be ridiculous to unite the six injurious acts with the worship of *Brūhma*, it is, therefore, natural to suppose, that the worship of the deity has nothing to do with them. But all those deceivers who advise you to worship idols, rob you of your wealth, and destroy you both in this world and the next. Being anxious for your wealth, they sometimes lead you to fulfil your unlawful desires, and under this guise induce you to perform *sustiyayuna*†, sometimes also, when you have fallen under misfortune, those remorseless deceivers deprive you of your wealth by feeding you with hopes of deliverance from misfortune. When your son is at the point of death, far from feeling commiseration, those deceivers, embracing this opportunity for the accumulation of gain, under the idea of charming away the disease, lessen your wealth and destroy your soul. Should the son die, they say, that there must have been some defect in the work, lest the parents should discredit the charms. Others say, that the act will not yet be found unfruitful, and that the son, has reached a

* The six acts are, propitiation, influencing others, rendering enemies insensible, enraging others, occasioning death by means of the bite of noxious reptiles or beasts, and destroying life. All these acts are supposed to be accomplished by means of sacrifices. The book from which we have quoted these diabolical acts is an 8vo volume of 80 pages, which details how these effects may be produced,—and explains the nature of the various sacrifices, and the names of the gods whose aid is necessary.

† *Sustiyayuna*, various actions performed to remove disease, and to obtain one's desires.

fortunate place. When the wife or child of a poor man who cannot expend a rupee on medicine, will, he sells his water-pot and brass plate, and performs the worship of the heavenly bodies which is not expensive, that he may charm away the disease. It is matter of sincere regret, that the worshippers of images believe, that he who is a collector for two rupees, is yet able by means of incantations to bestow lacks of rupees on another, and that though unable to preserve his own son or his friends, he can yet preserve the son or the friends of others. Death does not always follow disease, since some are healed. If perchance the patient should live, the assurance of these deceivers is increased. but if the patient should die, they still by various deceptions endeavour to support their credit."

It is customary while a cause is pending in court, for both parties through a priest to perform certain religious acts, to secure a favourable decision. How little do our judges in this country, while hearing the cause, realize the numerous rites which have been performed to secure their leaning to opposite sides of the question,—or when pronouncing a decree, imagine that it will be attributed, not to their justice, but to the influence of some of the Hindoo gods! In the succeeding paragraph the writer holds up this practice to ridicule.

"You likewise see that both the Plaintiff and the Defendant perform sacrifices for success. In this case he who is successful has his belief in the deceiver increased, and he who is unsuccessful has still his belief supported by various artifices. The ignorant idolater judges neither according to the *Shastras*, nor according to reason, since it is written in the *Shastras*, that men are induced to the performance of these works by the fruit promised in the *Shastras*, that they may thereby be drawn off from improper con-

duct It is also naturally impossible for any person, by sitting in a certain spot and moving his tongue, his hands, or his feet, to deliver one at a distance, from a fever, or from misfortune, or to secure the success of a cause in court, since no effect can be produced without an adequate cause Should any one, to support his credit, utter a thousand falsehoods under the guise of religion, the idolater is strengthened rather than staggered in his belief—and even an act of adultery, which is forbidden both by the *Shastras* and by common consent, if committed under the cloak of religion, is not considered disgraceful Drunkenness, which creates so many disputes, if covered with the same pretence, rather raises the man in popular estimation. Thus the idolater makes no distinction between virtue and vice, since a truly virtuous character is never guilty of falsehood, uncleanness, or excess ”

In mentioning adultery and drunkenness the author alludes to the *Vamacharees*, who indulge in every species of iniquity, under the pretence of religion The former crime refers to their infamous indulgences under the pretence of making an experiment on the success they have attained in restraining their desires !

“ If you ask why the worshippers of *Brahma* violate the *Shastras* by refusing food and flowers offered to idols, we reply, as we have before told you, that the judgment of food according to the *Smritees*, *Tantras*, and other *Shastras*, is a matter of temporal necessity, and that as such we practise it. There is moreover little distinction on this point, since, whether it be food offered to idols, or any thing else which you esteem most holy or most unholy, after it has been some time in the system, it is cast out on the dunghill If the sacrificial food did not after a time become impure, and were not expelled, it might be esteemed more holy than other food Hear

what *Muha-deva* says on the subject ‘Water is filled with frogs and insects, milk is produced from the flesh of the cow, and the fruits of the earth are produced from the dead body of *Mundhoo koituba* Every thing is therefore unholy ’”

Mundhoo-koituba was a monster produced from *Vishnoo*’s ear He was afterwards slaughtered by his creator, and of his dead body was the world created This speech of *Shiva* proves that amidst all the pretended discrimination of the Hindoos with regard to food, there is in reality nothing holy, since water is filled with insects, milk is a part of the body of the cow, and the fruits of the earth spring from a carcase

“If you say, that we who seek divine knowledge are still involved like others in worldly cares, and are subject to desire, passion, and the like, that we are anxious for excellent food, excellent equipages, and are engaged in disputes, whereas had we really attained divine knowledge, we should regard mud and Sandal wood with the same feelings, we reply, that while encumbered with bodies, both the wise and the ignorant, both beasts and birds, must act according to the principles which govern their nature, and the movements of their natural desires But the difference between a wise and an ignorant man is, that the ignorant, considering these actions as belonging

to the omnipresence of the deity. You who call an image God are desirous of excellent food, and excellent equipages, and are only anxious that we who acknowledge the deity as God, should renounce all food, and pass through life with insensibility¹ But be assured that the true worshippers of the deity will certainly enjoy more happiness in both worlds than the worshippers of idols To endeavour by all means to restrain the passions, is certainly the duty of a wise man, but to do this effectually requires much practice and if among those who seek the knowledge of the deity you find some who make no attempts to restrain their passions, no blame can be attached to the instructors or to the precepts Thus *Indra* and *Virochuna* both sought instruction of *Brahma*, *Indra* acted up to the knowledge he had received, and obtained the fulfilment of his wishes, but *Virochuna*, not following the path of true knowledge, remained an *Usoora* Thus also among ten students who receive instruction, three may follow up their knowledge, while seven lose the string of their meditation Though the instruction therefore may be the same, there may be a difference in the exertions of those who receive it This difference of practice is not confined to those who seek divine knowledge, among those devoted to works and to idol worship, some who receive the same instruction, act according thereto, and others do not

“If you ask, why we do not regard the auspiciousness of the stars and attend to the proper seasons for journeying, we reply, that we fear only the Supreme Being, we regard him only as able to fulfil our wishes and no one else Thus the *Veda*, ‘when you are acquainted with the Supreme *Brahma*, who is happiness itself, fear none else’ To speak more particularly, the sun and other planets have a specific station, but that they are the occasion of

good and evil in this world, and of the success or failure of journeys, can be believed only by those who have lost their reason. Were any one to say, that a mountain in Koorookshetra, or the motion of the leaf of a tree on it, was the cause of good or evil, he would be esteemed insane."

In his concluding paragraphs our author attempts to bring what he esteems the miseries of idol worshippers into one view, but while these even in his view are highly affecting, how meagre, how wretched is the system he has to offer them instead of idolatry!—No forgiving mercy for past transgressions—no acceptance through a Mediator—no Divine aid in seeking to please God—no enjoyment of his favour and almighty protection amidst the evils of life and the hatred and malice of men,—nothing of an eternal weight of glory to follow a life of suffering and conflict. Yet the picture is interesting, imperfect as it may be, it has truth for its basis, and, as far as it goes, it will serve as a platform on which the advocates of revealed truth may build to high advantage.

"Should you further ask, why we are at such variance with the worshippers of images, we reply, that we cannot cordially unite with those from whom we differ, both with regard to the concerns of this world and the next, as widely as the distance between the rising and the setting sun. Him whom we regard as the immaculate, omnipresent, indestructible God, you dishonour by subjecting him to the disgrace of birth and death, by representing him sometimes as given to adultery, sometimes to robbery, to war, to evil desire, and anger. how then can any friendship exist between us? On this subject a chief sage has said, that 'in the Kulee yooga hypocrites will ascribe to the immaculate spirit, birth, injury, falsehood, passions, theft, rage, adultery, death, and discomfiture.' We cer-

tainly pity you when we see your various miseries, thus, when you have food, you refrain from eating it under the idea that the deity will be pleased with your starving yourselves. When you enjoy time, you deceive yourselves by various devices, and refrain from work, and pass through life without advantage. The virtuous poor, who are the real objects of charity, you pass by, and give to the proud and wealthy deceiver. Instead of offering sweet-smelling flowers to those who can smell them, you give them either to a brass plate, to an inanimate image, or to a river. In the cold weather you voluntarily suffer from the cold water of the river, in the summer from the heat of fire*, night and day you are filled with imaginary terrors from spirits and the like. Deceived by the idea that God is in one place and not in another, you wander through various countries, suffering divers miseries, and sometimes even death itself. Though you have sweet water, you prefer drinking and bathing in the muddy and brackish waters of the Ganges. Some of you by marrying many wives entail misery and disgrace on them, and on yourselves grief and sorrow. With twenty or thirty rupees, which is not even the value of a horse, you buy an image of stone or wood, and call it your God. You take for your spiritual guides men filled with falsehood, hypocrisy, and pride, the greatest of all mortal enemies. The *Soorya Siddhanta* and other astronomical works say, that the earth is round, suspended in space, that its shadow occasions the eclipses of the moon, that the heat of the sun draws up water and occasions rain,—disregarding all these truths, you teach your children the *Pooranas*, which have regulated the form of the world

* Hindoos are commanded in summer to sit near a fire, that the inconvenience they feel may be grateful to the deity

merely with the view of inculcating ceremonies These things you teach your children like parrots, telling them that the world is three-cornered, and rests on the head of a snake, that Rahoo, the enemy of the sun and moon, attempts to seize them, that the male and female clouds produce rain,—and when by the friction of two clouds thunder is produced, that the gods are making a noise,—and that sneezing, or the sound of the lizard, renders it auspicious to perform any work These and a thousand other follies we see you constantly practise and teach to others When we see men thus acting like irrational beings, we naturally feel sorrow We cannot agree in opinion with you, since that which you esteem holiness, and those actions which you introduce into worship, we esteem unholy Thus you regard earth, stone, trees, beasts, birds, &c as God,—we do not You deem motions of the hands and feet—and dancing—and diversion—and the wearing of a necklace and marks on the forehead, deeds of holiness,—we do not You drink the water of a peculiar spot, and anoint your body with dirt and mud brought from particular places, and esteem these acts holy,—we do not Some of you consider the drinking of wine, and the extinction of life, and the shedding of blood, as conducive to salvation,—we do not To burn defenceless women, to murder an aged father and mother by immersing them in water, you esteem holy,—we esteem these deeds unholy To call a large assembly and give away money, you esteem holy,—we do not You esteem it holy to sound shells, bells, and musical instruments, and dance,—we do not You refrain from food at particular seasons, and oblige others to do the same, and esteem this an act of holiness,—we do not You esteem adultery committed in the act of worship a holy act,—we do not We therefore again intreat you to believe in God

as omnipresent, and as the witness of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and by following his commands, which are advantageous both to yourselves and to others, to obtain the fulfilment of all your wishes. If, instead of receiving benefit from our instructions, you despise and vilify us, we shall treat you with contempt. Since those who have the misfortune to consider earth, wood, stone, and metals as God, and to worship monkies, bears, kites, and jackals, can neither benefit nor injure us, they are rather objects of pity than of abuse. We therefore again intreat you to forsake the worship of idols, and to give yourselves to the worship of the Supreme Being."

We here close our extracts from this work, and when we look back on the space they have occupied, we feel that nothing but the importance of the subject as thus handled by a native, can apologize for their extreme length. While the work is argumentative in a high degree, it is interspersed with observations, which for keenness of satire would scarcely have disgraced the pen of Lucian. How far the natives of India may be disposed to sacrifice the absurdities of their practice at the shrine of ridicule, we are not prepared to say, but it is not difficult to foresee, that a succession of works similar to the present, must in time raise the tone of public sentiment. If we may judge from the remarks we have heard respecting the present publication, it has not been altogether inefficacious. Were it proper to quote Bengalee, we might here insert the popular adage which has been applied with such aptness to the present publication, but these pithy sayings lose so much of their spirit in another language, that we should not venture it, if it did not apply with equal force to all the efforts necessary for the improvement of India. The ten-headed *Ravana*, the sovereign of Ceylon, had displeased his brother *Vibheeshuna*, who

deserted to the besieging army under Rama, and contributed powerfully to the fall of the monster by assisting Rama with his local knowledge of the situation of the country. This circumstance has given rise to the following aphorism, "*Ghor-sundhanc Ravuna nusta*," which imports, that Ravuna was ruined through the knowledge of his situation possessed by the enemy, this we have frequently heard applied to the present publication. So intimate a knowledge of the recondite rites and mysteries of Hindooism can scarcely ever be acquired in an equal degree by a foreigner, however extensive his acquaintance with the popular manners. After residing twenty years in the bosom of the people, with the most anxious spirit of enquiry, there are innumerable circumstances connected with their worship, their habits, their feelings, which will elude his observation. Yet how important a knowledge of these is to a due exposure of the errors of the Hindoo system, the present work fully demonstrates. What European could have written a work equally delicate and equally severe in its application? What European can ever possess those peculiar advantages which a native acquires even without effort? If in the improvement of India, European science be requisite for the inculcation of superior ideas, the assistance of natives is equally desirable on the ground of their intimate knowledge of the habits and feelings of their countrymen. But the latter is incommunicable to a European, while superior ideas may be acquired by a native, indulged with equal opportunities for attaining them. And who that has read these extracts will say that our author, though unassisted by the advantages we possess, has not exhibited such force of reasoning, such strength of intellect, as with them would have placed him in the foremost rank of the defenders of truth? We appeal to those who have

accompanied us through this work, whether a native equal to such a production, would find himself unequal to the comprehension of Bacon, or Locke, or Butler, or Howe? Should any object to this, the inconsistency of some of his arguments, and his occasional departure from sound reason, we would beg them to consider his limited education and the errors and defects of the system which he attempts to rebuild on the ruins of polytheism. If a native of India has been capable of producing so masterly a treatise by the pure force of unassisted genius, what may not be expected from natives when favoured with opportunities of cultivating the rich and varied stores of European knowledge? Who, on reading these extracts, has not rejoiced to find so much native talent in the country, and felt a latent wish that men so largely gifted by nature, had enjoyed opportunities of becoming acquainted with the learning of Europe? That Hindoos who have raised themselves above the absurdities of polytheism, should have sought out and embraced that which was most noble and dignified in their own literature, to which alone they had access,—and should have taken refuge from the puerilities of idolatry in the philosophical doctrine of matter and spirit, which has been sanctioned by all the talent and all the learning of India for a succession of ages, is not matter of astonishment,—and what benevolent mind, perceiving the diligence with which our author has brought forward in this controversy every particle of truth he could glean from his own books, would deny him that light, that superior knowledge, which might enable him to detect and renounce the errors of the *Vedas* themselves? These are our natural allies in the propagation of truth, and we cannot stand acquitted of folly if we deny them those advantages which would render their aid completely efficient. The rich vein of oriental intellect is no longer hidden from

our view, and while we may think it necessary to import our own treasures, it will argue a total absence of reason, if we neglect to cultivate the original mine with which Providence has blessed the country, or to give its ore that exquisite polish of which it is so susceptible. Divine goodness has not been wanting to India, it possesses in rich abundance all those natural advantages which may enable it to emerge from the thick cloud of error by which it has been so long covered and to crown these advantages, Divine Providence has now taken its sceptre out of the hands of a bigoted race, under whose withering sway nations dwindled into complete insignificance, and placed it in the hands of Britain—not at a time when she had nothing to communicate,—or was contending with other nations for existence, but when, in the security of undisturbed sovereignty, she is at leisure to impart to the nations under her influence those rich treasures of knowledge she has herself accumulated.

The publication of this work enables us also to perceive the advantages which may result from free discussion conducted by private individuals among the natives, as well as the complete safety which attends it. It may be within the recollection of some of our readers, that about twelve years ago an unfounded suspicion of danger from attempts to enlighten India found its way into the minds of some persons in England, and that certain pamphlets in the Bengalee language were translated into our tongue, to demonstrate how closely their circulation was connected with the instability of our eastern possessions. Time has now refuted those suspicions, and alarm has now subsided. It is, however, a happy circumstance that the present publication has appeared so late, for, had it been sent into circulation at that season, we cannot say that it would not have contributed to invigorate suspicion,

and excite greater alarm. That such prognostics of danger would have been unfounded, however, will appear from the fact that this publication, containing so close an examination of the doctrines and practice of polytheism, interspersed with incontestably more poignant ridicule, more keenness of satire, than was to be found in all the works which twelve years ago excited such alarm, has now been in circulation more than eight months, and been read by the main supporters of the system it attempts to invalidate, without exciting the most distant suspicion that idolatry is to be chased from India by the arm of coercion. But on what principle has it proved so innoxious? Because it bears not the stamp of public authority,—because every man who reads it, will instantly recognize it as the work of a private individual,—because the writer has not been raised from a cottage to a palace, decorated with honours or loaded with wealth,—because not one ray of favour has visited his humble dwelling, from those who have the power of dispensing riches and honour. Had it appeared with any single appendage which could have identified it with government,—were the author, or his opponent who should furnish the best reply, to be raised in consequence to some office of profit and honour, the case would be altered, and many who have never read it, might feel an involuntary alarm for the continuance of those rites, which it is in human nature to surrender to reason—never to authority. But the wise moderation of the ruling power on this subject has spread unbounded confidence among all classes of the natives, and relieved them from all anxiety. Nothing can be more harmless than free discussion among the natives themselves, while it stands on its own basis, and leans not for support on the ruling authority. Those who would represent the Hindoos as averse to free enquiry, strangely misrepresent them, and

cast a libel on their character for which they can expect no gratitude. The fact is, that the natives are exceedingly fond of discussion. For one classic work on History, or Geography, or Astronomy, we have ten argumentative works on the subject of the Divine essence. The work under review is not, therefore, the first of its kind. Had it been so,—had it been the first examination of the claims of their Three Hundred and Thirty Millions of gods to the title and attributes of deity, the novelty of the subject might have occasioned disquietude, and some might have felt a degree of fear at this first movement of the mass of superstition which had slumbered quietly for ages. But the Hindoos have been discussing the doctrines of their own faith for twenty centuries, for twenty centuries have the superior minds of the East bent their earnest enquiries to this subject,—on this field have they reaped all their laurels, and in the ardour of these speculations, they have left the history and geography of India to find its own way to posterity. Is it conceivable, then, that under the mild and benign sway of Britain, when religious discussion has been separated from every political consideration, more danger will attend it than under the intolerant sway of our immediate predecessors, or the bigoted government of the ancient Hindoo sovereigns?

If it be necessary, however, that works of this description should challenge assent on their own intrinsic merits, receiving neither the support nor the discountenance of the supreme authority, this can only be secured by the perfect freedom of the native press. Had the present work been submitted to a previous revision, it must either have been suppressed, or have gone forth with the sanction of Government. Had it been suppressed, there would have been an end to free enquiry. But while the liberality of our countrymen removes every apprehension of this na-

X

REVIEW OF A TREATISE

IN THE BENGALIE LANGUAGE

ON CEREMONIAL UNCLEANNESS

Calcutta, pp 140 *

WE have sometimes felt a degree of anxiety lest the subjects treated of in the progress of this work, should have wearied the patience of our readers by their uniform reference to Asia, and more particularly to India. This, however, was the original design of the publication, and the encouragement with which it has been favoured warrants a belief, that the investigation of subjects of this nature is in unison with the spirit of the present age. In the early period of our Indian empire, the domestic economy of the natives was in a great measure overlooked, not so much through a careless indifference to the welfare of the people, as through the peculiar circumstances of the times. Our countrymen were then occupied in laying the foundation of this empire, and their attention was necessarily absorbed by the political struggles in which they were engaged. That season of turbulence, and war, and confusion, has now terminated, and left us in undisturbed possession of the country, under circumstances highly favourable for a close examination of the feelings, habits, and manners of the people. These opportunities have not been neglected, and the growing anxiety now mani-

* Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No III p 352

tested to survey in detail the separate divisions of the native character and institutions, is what might have been expected from the habits of our countrymen and the extensive field opened to their view. If to this spirit of enquiry we add the magnitude of our conquest, its great importance to the interests of our native land, and the vast multitude whose weal or woe depends on our conduct, we think a case may be made out to justify the appearance of a work devoted chiefly to subjects connected with this country, the centre of all European influence in Asia. If the improvement of the people be among the objects of our Indian pilgrimage, if we feel anxious to leave them any return for the wealth by which we are enabled to revisit our native land in circumstances of ease and prosperity, it cannot be matter of indifference that the true state of the country, in all its varied shades of misery, should be laid open to view. To found any plan of moral or political improvement on any other basis, would be to defeat our own expectations, and hence every report of the situation of the country which wears the appearance of fidelity, is of real value. It is not in great and overwhelming calamities that the mass of human misery consists. Famine and pestilence are of rare occurrence, ages roll over without producing those mighty conquerors who desolate the earth, it is from the daily events of life, from minute observances, from the silent operation of mischievous principles which, from their apparent insignificance, awaken no vigilance, from vicious habits interwoven into the constitution of nations, that distress and misery arise. More particularly is this the case in India, and hence institutions which possess little intrinsic importance, assume a formidable magnitude when their baneful effects extend to every dwelling, and destroy the happiness of every family. In proportion therefore to the

diversity and extent of the burdens under which the people labour, does it become necessary that information should be given, not in general and vague observations, but with such minuteness as to enable those who would fain remove them, to take their exact gage and dimensions. Moral maladies require as much of keen and persevering investigation, as the diseases of the body, and if in the latter, no remedy can be judiciously applied without an intimate acquaintance with every bearing of the subject, those diseases which imperceptibly taint the current of social happiness, and are visible only by their effects, must necessarily demand equal keenness of research. Happily the publications of the Native Press are likely, in the course of time, to afford ample information on all the branches of Hindoo economy, and to supply those deficiencies in the scale of our knowledge, which are inseparable from the limited nature of our opportunities. Those works which are composed for the information of the natives, will at the same time serve to enlarge our knowledge of the subject, more especially as the native editors in many cases combine in one treatise the regulations dispersed through a number of volumes. By the aid of these works, therefore, a European will be able, in the space of a few hours, to comprehend a subject which would otherwise have required months of application.

On this occasion we have selected a small work on Ceremonial Impurity, which has recently issued from the native press. The subject is by no means inviting, but as it forms a prominent feature in the institutions of the Vedas, and entails an almost intolerable burden on so many millions, we have thought it would not be devoid of interest. Like most Hindoo productions, it is composed in metrical stanzas. It occupies one hundred and forty pages, of which the first fifty are in the Bengalee lan-

guage, and contain a summary of the law on this subject, together with a short treatise on penance, the Appendix consists of authorities from the original *Sungskṛita* works. It has the benefit of an index, an improvement which has originated in an imitation of our books, and which we hope will never be omitted in any future native publication. The first eight pages of the book may be considered as the introduction. dedications are as yet unknown among Hindoo editors, except to the gods, as were titlepages before our arrival. In this introduction there is a long string of compliments to Raja *Kṛishna-Chundra Raya*, the late sovereign of *Kṛishna-nugura*, and the great patron of the literati, in which he is compared to the gods and heroes of antiquity with as little regard to truth as to good taste. This is succeeded by an account of the author and of his ancestry, embellished with no little modesty. He ingenuously describes himself as having been reduced to poverty, as having sought a livelihood in the metropolis, the resort of needy scholars, and on the failure of all his schemes, as having been induced to publish the present volume. The introduction is in the worst style of punning affectation, every line consists of four monosyllabic words, all terminating in the same sounds and producing a jingling rhyme, which is any thing but harmonious. The sense and the ideas are equally sacrificed to this corrupt taste, which, strange to say, is now so popular in India, that the most profound scholars esteem the introduction of a miserable pun an ornament to their works.

We have room for only a brief analysis of the work. Some of the rules are however so puerile, that we beg to give them at full length, as they will serve to shew into what depths of absurdity and childishness the most

esteemed native authors have fallen in their attempts to support a fallacious system of religion

Ceremonial impurity among the Hindoos is totally different from ceremonial uncleanness among the Jews. A chief object of the latter was evidently the comfort and health of the people. Among the Hindoos, health is scarcely affected thereby, its chief effect is to incapacitate for the performance of religious duties. Ceremonial impurity is defined to be, *that which invariably occasions a suspension of the duties commanded in the Vedas*. While a person is unclean, he can neither perform his religious duties, nor partake of food with those of his own cast, nor receive or bestow either presents or instruction. Certain acts, however, are so necessary in the business of life, that to have prohibited them, would have endangered the reception, or the continuance of the system. Their importance therefore was considered as overcoming the taint communicated by ceremonial impurity. Such are the ceremonies connected with the birth of a son, those daily funeral offerings to a deceased relative which are incumbent during the first ten days after death, as well as the rites immediately preceding death. Above all a man may bestow gifts on brahmuns, if he have previously vowed them. Kings may perform their regal functions, and their subjects may attend to their respective professions, and beggars may pursue their vocation without reference to uncleanness. Impurity commences as soon as the event which causes it is known. If a man, after hearing of the event, swallow the morsel then in his mouth, he must fast one day, but if he conclude his meal, he must continue without food for three days. Hence friends invariably delay the announcing of either afflictive or gratifying intelligence till after the completion of a meal, for we shall

perceive in the sequel, that intelligence of both kinds is equally inimical to the pleasures of the table

The degree and continuance of ceremonial impurity are varied not only by the nature of the event, but by cast, in which, as usual, the heaviest burden falls on the poor shoodras. In a case of total impurity a brahman is unclean ten days, a kshetriya twelve, a voishya fifteen, and a shoodra thirty days. Uncleaness is moreover not confined to the nearest relatives, but extends to all within the sixth degree of consanguinity, which evidently shews that a care for health is quite out of the question. What could have given rise to this absurd law, it is difficult to imagine. If we reckon all the kindred within these degrees at one thousand, and calculate thirty births and thirty deaths annually in this little family, we shall have sixty occasions in a year on which a brahman becomes unclean for ten days. Happily the inevitable migration of families nullifies this law, which in fact could never have been fully observed, and which, had it been possible to honour in its full extent, would have prevented every brahman's performing the duties of religion from the time of his investiture to the period of his death, nay, it would have tended to annihilate the whole of this sacred tribe, and left the world for ever without the blessings of brahmanic instruction, since no investiture of the poita is permitted while there is any known uncleaness in the family.

But to return to our author the death of any relative within the eighth, ninth, and tenth, degrees of affinity occasions an impurity of three days, from the eleventh to the fourteenth degree, of two days and a night. Beyond this, the shastras do not seem to contemplate the discovery of any natural relationship, and merely direct, that any individual who can trace himself up to one common

ancestor with a deceased friend, becomes unclean till he has bathed

In some cases relatives die in a distant village, sometimes they are lost in rivers, or consumed in a conflagration. On these occasions, as the funeral obsequies are indispensable, the shastras have prescribed an injunction, which some may be disposed to think ludicrous. We will extract it from the work. "When the father dies in a distant village, and his body is not burnt, and none of his bones can be recovered, let the son form an image of leaves, and by the power of incantations, transform it into his deceased parent, and burn it with the same rites which would have accompanied the consumption of his father's corpse. Should he find a bone of the deceased after the conclusion of this ceremony, let him burn it and remain unclean for three days. Let this image be made of leaves of the *sar* tree, to be bound together with wool, and covered over with a paste of barley.—The head must contain forty leaves, the neck ten, the stomach thirty, the belly twenty, fifty are allowed for each hand and foot, one for each finger and toe, and thirty for the thighs." There are several other injunctions which refer to relatives dying at a distance, with which we will close this branch of the subject. The son is to regard the father as dead, of whom he hears no tidings for twelve years, after that period he is unclean for three days, and is to prepare and consume the image of leaves just mentioned. Much discrepancy prevails in the shastras relative to the period when these funeral rites are to be performed. Should the father return after they have been performed, he may be restored to his family after sundry expensive propitiations. If intelligence of the death of a relative be received within one year after the event, the family is unclean three days, if after the expiration of a year, a father, a mother,

and a husband are unclean only one day, and the relatives till they have bathed

The laws relative to women cannot fail to strike the reader of this work as excessively severe. We pass over the various minute and absurd laws relative to abortion. The mother among the sacred tribe, immediately on the birth of a son, is unclean twenty days, and thirty on the birth of a daughter, shoodra women are unclean in both cases thirty days. During the first ten days whoever happens to touch the mother or the infant, is subject to temporary uncleanness, removable by ablution. Impurity occasioned by a birth, extends to all the relatives within the sixth degree, but should the father or his other wives touch the mother during the first ten days, they incur the same impurity, and may not be touched. But should the mother be so unhappy as to touch any individual of low cast, she must fast three days, some shastras apply this law to the months preceding her accouchement.

In order to understand the law of uncleanness as it relates to the death of children, it will be necessary to premise, that, according to the Hindoo religion, the soul of every being on its departure from this world enters on a state called *preta*, (literally a ghost,) and is endowed with an invisible, but filthy and disgusting body, in this state it remains for one year, until all the funeral rites commanded by the shastras have been performed, when it is permitted to return to the earth and assume a corporeal existence in that form to which its previous preponderance of merit or demerit has entitled it. Hence the anxiety of the Hindoo for male offspring, that he may secure the performance of those funeral rites on the part of his son, which will, at an early period, liberate his departed soul from its unpleasant confinement, for if these

rites be not performed, the soul continues in that filthy habitation, till it has expiated the amount of its former transgressions by suffering

Children who die under the age of two, are to be buried instead of being burnt, and for those who are buried no funeral obsequies can be performed. If the corpse of the child be burnt through affliction, the parents, if brahmins, are unclean three days, if shoodras, twenty. The child is to be shaven as soon as possible after its birth, great importance being attached to tonsure, as it is strongly decisive of his future happiness or misery. If a child be shaven, and die at the termination of two years, the full rites for the dead are to be performed on its behalf,—under that age, no rites are admitted. Hence, when children die before that auspicious event, it is supposed that in the preceding birth their sins preponderated over their merits, and that this untimely death, which deprives them of the rites of the dead, is the punishment inflicted on them *. The degree of uncleanness which attaches to the relatives, is regulated by the age at which the child dies, the appearance of teeth, and the application or omission of the razor. Thus if it die within six months, unshaven and without teeth, the relatives recover their purity by merely bathing,—the parents are however unclean twenty-four hours. If teeth appear within six months, and the child die, the relatives are unclean twenty-four hours, the parents and brothers three days, if the child has been shaven and die within six months, all the relatives are unclean three days. If it have not

* It is, however, customary for relatives to perform a shraddha for them at Gaya, which is esteemed sufficiently efficacious to liberate their spirits from their intermediate *preta* state.

been shaven and die within twelve months, the relatives are unclean one day, the parents three. A daughter is, however, less troublesome, for if she die within two years and before she have been shaven, the relatives become pure by bathing, if afterwards, the uncleanness extends to one day. If she die after having been betrothed, both families are unclean three days, but if no matrimonial contract have been ratified, the family of her parents alone are unclean for three days.

Hindoo women are never married to any who bear the most distant affinity to their own family. We know not how this distinction is preserved in the other provinces of the empire, but in Bengal, almost every brahmin belongs to one of the five families into which the tribe is divided, and is descended from one of the five brahmuns who came into Bengal from Kunnoja *. No woman therefore is ever married to a youth of the same division with her father's family, but is given to some brahmin of one of the other four divisions, and all connection with her paternal or maternal relatives ceases on her entering the married state. The only relatives through whom she becomes unclean are her parents. Her brother does not become impure on her decease, nor on the death of her children, though this point is left rather ambiguous. She is no longer a *supunda*, a partaker of the funeral cake in her father's family, the burden of impurity which her accouchement or death may occasion, is transferred to the kindred of her husband. Some of her paternal and

* There are, however, many of the descendants of the ancient brahmuns of Bengal, but they are held in little esteem, and have no intercourse with the regular brahmuns, though many of them have contrived through the absence of family registers to nungle with their families.

maternal relatives are rendered unclean, but only for a limited time, complete uncleanness being out of the question

Instances are constantly occurring of Double Uncleaness, that is, when a man is rendered impure by some new event, before he is free from the impurity of a preceding occurrence, and this is by far the most intricate and difficult branch of the subject. The first section of the chapter on this head treats of the strength of the various occasions of impurity. A greater uncleanness swallows up the less. That occasioned by death in a family is greater than that occasioned by birth. The death of a father, a mother, or a husband, is of more consequence than the death of any other relative. Should a child be born, and the father die at the same time, the latter is of the highest importance, but if a distant relative die, the birth of the child is esteemed of greater magnitude. That occasion on which the impurity extends to the greatest length of time, exceeds in importance one of a more limited period, and of two inferior degrees of uncleanness, that occasioned by the death of the nearest relative preponderates over the other.

The author then proceeds to narrate the law in these cases. If on the ninth or penultimate day of uncleanness, a new occasion of impurity arise, it is lost in the preceding days of uncleanness, but if it arise on the last day, the impurity is extended for two days longer, and if between the morning and evening twilight of the day of purification, for three additional days. This is the general spirit of the regulations on this point, to descend to more minute particulars would only be to exhaust the patience of the reader, on which we will urge no farther claim than while we quote certain miscellaneous injunctions, scattered up and down in the volume.

If both he who offers and he who receives food, be ignorant of an event which occasions impurity, they are not culpable, but should one receive food of another, or sleep on the same couch, or sit with him, knowing that he is unclean, he incurs the same degree of impurity

If a woman be accouched or die in the house of her parents, the parents are unclean for three days, and the brother for one. And if such an event occur in the three principal rooms of the dwelling, the dormitory, the temple, or the dining-room, the father must be unclean ten days, and the brother three

On the death of a near relative, the unclean are forbidden for three days to partake of prepared food. During the whole period of their impurity they are exceedingly limited in the articles of food

If a mother bear twins, a boy and a girl, she is unclean for the daughter alone, that is, for thirty days, the uncleanness for a son in similar circumstances, being twenty days, is absorbed in that for the daughter

The injunctions which we have hitherto detailed relate to ordinary death. In the case of decease out of the course of nature, however, the term of impurity is shortened. If one die from abstinence, or by fire, or by water, through lightning, by a fall from a precipice, or in battle, by the horns or the tusks of a beast, or by the bite of a serpent, or through thieves, or by the hands of a chundala, (a man of the lowest cast,) his kindred are unclean only three nights. But if death follow any one of these accidents after an interval of three days, they are unclean to the fullest extent

If a man die in battle who has never turned his back on the enemy, his kindred are purified by bathing. If he perish in defence of a cow or a brahman, they continue impure one day. If he fall in battle where his sovereign

is not present, or die by the weapons of his foes, or suffer execution, his kindred are unclean for one day. If he die in his flight from the field of combat, or by a club, his relatives are unclean three days.

The following individuals being esteemed infamous, occasion no uncleanness among their kindred, they exhibit a strange mixture of vice and misfortune grouped together: he who deliberately terminates his existence, or willingly exposes himself to wild beasts, he who is executed for theft or adultery, he who having quarrelled with a *chundila*, falls in combat with him, he who takes medicine which he is conscious will augment his complaint, who seeks the injury of others, he who is envious or hypocritical, a eunuch whether horn such or not, he on whose ground any individual has been put to death, one who dies of ulcers in his throat, he who destroys himself by abstinence in a fit of passion, or who dies by the curse of a brahmin, these are not to be burnt, but thrown into a river, and none of their kindred to become unclean. A *muha-patoh*, (he who knowingly destroys a brahmin, a brahmin who drinks wine, he who steals gold from a brahmin to the amount of a gold mohur, or who violates the wife of his father, or one who partakes of food with any of these,) a leper, and one who in consequence of inebriety in a former birth, has a small black tooth growing between his two front teeth, may not even be touched after death.

perform all the ordinances of the Vedas, but after the eighth month she is incompetent to the performance of any religious act, and no one is allowed to touch her. On the death of a woman before her accouchement, the infant is to be extracted and buried, and the woman burnt.

When a brahmūn follows the corpse of another brahmūn of different kindred, he must purify himself by bathing, touching fire, and eating clarified butter. If the corpse belong to the military tribe, the brahmūn who follows it, is unclean one day, if to the commercial class, he is unclean two days, but if the deceased be of the servile class, for three days, after which he must perform one hundred Pranayamas. A Pranayama is performed by closing each nostril successively, and exhaling breath, and is to be accompanied with internal meditation. If a brahmūn follow the corpse of a shoodra even by mistake, he must bathe, touch fire, and partake of clarified butter.

If one touch the bones of a brahmūn, he must bathe, and put water into his mouth three times from the palm of his hand, if the bone be covered with flesh, he must stroke a cow, look at the sun, and then bathe, if he touch it knowing to whom it belonged, the uncleanness is augmented.

If a brahmūn perform the funeral offices for another unknown brahmūn who had no friends, he must bathe and eat clarified butter, if he assist at his funeral with the hope of obtaining his wealth, he is fully unclean, if in this case the corpse belonged to one of the servile class, he is unclean thirty days. If the smoke of a funeral pile blow on any one, he must purify himself by bathing. He who weeps for another becomes unclean, if a brahmūn go to the house of a shoodra, and mourn for him within ten days after his death, he is impure three days, if after ten

days, he is unclean only for one day, if a brahmin mourn with the friends of a deceased shoodra without shedding tears, he is still unclean one day

The day on which the finger is cut, or a drop of blood shed, the individual becomes unclean, and can perform no religious duty, if blood drop from the tooth, the most essential services of religion are to be suspended, in this case, however, a person may offer the funeral cake or perform the duties consequent on an eclipse, or if he arrive at a place of great sanctity he may avail himself of the occasion. After tansure, weeping, touching what is forbidden, or vomiting, a man must purify himself by bathing

He who has lost cast, a chundala, a fool, one not perfectly sane, a midwife, a woman for a month after her accouchement, or during her courses, a village hog, a fowl, a dog, or an undertaker, are not to be touched

There are certain who are considered unclean even till death those who neglect the duties of their tribe, a brahmin who knows not his gayutree, he who has never made gifts to a brahmin, or who is always subject to others, he who is always ill, or perpetually involved in debt, who is perpetually melancholy, one without faith, he who is always subject to his wife, or who is generally despicable. As to these all acts of worship are forbidden, they are worse than excommunicated, being cut off from all means of obtaining the blessings of a future life, as well as from all society in this, nothing, therefore, can exceed in cruelty this classification *

The following is the mode of purification to be observed on the departure of uncleanness. The impure individual is to wash his vestments in his own dwelling,

* In another shastra it is said that the childless can never reach heaven

besmear the house with earth and cow-dung, destroy all his earthen cooking utensils, anoint his body with a peculiar species of oil, bathe, clothe himself in clean apparel, stroke a cow, and touch gold

We here close our extracts from this code of impurity, which, for puerility and yet for severity, has perhaps no equal among the laws of any other nation. Many of its prescriptions have necessarily fallen into disuse in this iron age, but those which continue to be regarded are sufficiently numerous to render the life of a Hindoo a grievous burden. It is singular, that in laying the foundation of a religion which surpasses all others for its minute and endless religious observances, the interests of a future state should have been placed so much beneath the concerns of this world. Ceremonial uncleanness impedes in few instances the performance of secular duties, but the ceremonies on which a Hindoo depends for eternal bliss are subject to endless interruptions. Even the birth of a child suspends all the duties of religion, because the deity cannot accept of any services from one who is ceremonially unclean.

The reader will naturally ask, On what principle is this vast superstructure raised, and for what purpose should the poor Hindoo be subjected to such constant distress? He will find an answer to his enquiry, if he will consider whom it benefits. It benefits the brahmuns, the only individuals to whom the whole current of Hindoo observances is propitious. After having created this sacred tribe, it was necessary to provide for their support in the credulity of the people, and that they have been most amply provided for, is unquestionable, when they descend so low as to glean support from the mire and slime of ceremonial impurity. Moreover this code is a part of the Vedas, which none but brahmuns may study, the secret

of uncleanness is therefore in their possession, and forms by no means an inconsiderable branch of their trade, as it is requisite for the inhabitants, on every emergency, to apply to some expounder of the *Vedas*. The brahmanic expounder of the laws of impurity is therefore a person of no little consequence in the commonwealth, his aid being required much more frequently than that of a physician. Every cluster of villages throughout the country has some legal instructor, to whom the native resorts in every season of difficulty with a present in his hand.

On a review of this system, we cannot but deplore its tendency to destroy all sense of *moral impurity*. The grand object of this code is evidently to interrupt those acts of worship and devotion on which a Hindoo is taught to believe that his future happiness is suspended. These become unacceptable to the object they worship, not through any evil dispositions, nor even through any outward act of wickedness, but through certain accidents over which the worshipper has not the least controul, and which may possibly happen at a distance from him. This must tend exceedingly to weaken his sense of *moral evil*, and to destroy his veneration for the object of worship. Are his religious exercises rendered equally unacceptable by moral pollution? If they be, this only places moral impurity on the same level with ceremonial. But if moral pollution *has not* the same effect with ceremonial uncleanness, (and we have abundant proof that it has not,) this sinks it far beneath ceremonial impurity as an object of dread. Hence if a Hindoo retain in any degree that sense of moral evil imperfectly impressed by nature on the hearts of all, he must necessarily despise the object of his worship for disregarding the service offered him even by the most sincere mind, on account of that ceremonial impurity which he himself views as nothing, while

he regards it through custom. This system then leads either to the utter extinction of all moral feeling on the one hand—or to atheism and the secret but real contempt of every object of worship on the other. Such is the system under which possibly a hundred millions of our fellow-creatures are both living and dying.

It is also cause for deep regret that men of the largest intellect in India should stoop to such puerile and unprofitable discussions, that those who apply to study with ardour, should lose so much of their valuable time on a subject, which, when completely acquired, does not advance them one step in solid knowledge. The volume under review, though written with the view of bringing the subject within the comprehension of common minds, and composed in the Bengalee language, is scarcely intelligible to any but those who have already studied the subject in the Hindoo Colleges. After proceeding through a few of the introductory pages, we found our native assistant, though a man of great learning and well versed in the *Sanskrita*, unable to explain it, and were obliged to call in the aid of a man to whom the subject was familiar. Eighteen months of the most valuable season of life are thrown away by law students on this unprofitable study. All this time is utterly lost for all beneficial purposes,—nay, it is worse than lost, since it contributes to bind down the only men who devote themselves to study, to admire and support the most burdensome system of ceremonies ever invented by man. Thus the intellect of a learned Hindoo is fettered, the march of improvement effectually checked, and in lieu of a gradual approximation to the noblest truths of science, we behold among the native literati a blind attachment to ancient doctrines, remarkable chiefly for their absurdity. Hence those minds which, under a different course of study, might

have grasped whatever is noble in the intellectual pursuits of man, are debased by studying the most childish follies, by devoting their valuable time to the task of ascertaining when a Hindoo may and when he may not partake of the bounty of his Creator, when he may or may not be touched by his relatives! Nothing more effectually retards the progress of improvement than such a devotion of the faculties of the mind. The ignorance of the dark ages was accompanied with similar discussions, and wherever such studies become the order of the day, improvement is at a stand, the intellect is buried beneath an overwhelming mass of unprofitable speculations, the more dangerous as they assume the appearance of learning, and monopolize all that respect and admiration, which in a more auspicious age is bestowed on the substantial triumphs of genius. When astronomy is separated from the disgraceful appendage of astrology,—when such doctrines as those of ceremonial uncleanness, diet, purification, penance, expiation, are banished from the studies of Hindoo jurisconsults, and in their stead, are substituted the Sacred Scriptures, the law of nature and of nations, and the knowledge of the west, then, and not till then, can we expect a general ardour for science and literature to awake in the minds of the native literati

XI

ON THE USE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE INDIAN COURTS OF JUDICATURE *

THERE IS something in the human mind which renders it partial to ancient errors, however absurd in their nature, or injurious in their effects. From whatever principle it may proceed, that which our predecessors did, comes recommended to us with a force almost irresistible. Nor is this the case merely when a custom or practice has been evidently the dictate of wisdom. It may have originated in accident,—in the idleness of those who preceded us—or even in their vices. Still it is ancient, it was the practice of others before us. What! are we wiser than they? more capable of entering into their circumstances, who are so far remote from the period of action, and so little acquainted with the reasons which originated the practice in question? It cannot be, our predecessors were surely wiser than we are, or at least they possessed opportunities of judging which far exceed ours. They must therefore have been right, and for us to examine customs they have left us, the principles of which are now lost in oblivion, what arrogance! what folly! On grounds equally solid with these, did our ancestors plead for the superior advantages of performing their devotions in Latin, of which they understood nothing,

against all that modern innovators could urge, and in that age of humility, when a prelate meekly accepted the aid of a friend in signing a deed, nor forbade the record, "as my Lord Bishop cannot write I have signed this instrument for him," if in the formula of devotion the radical part of a verb were by some accident changed, still in expressing to the deity the idea "we have taken," the new, the innovating *sumpsimus** was in value incomparably below the venerable *mumpsimus*. Thus, too, the innovation of the fantastic Galileo in presuming to maintain that this firm and stable earth whirls itself round like a child's plaything, was, in the opinion of the grave and the learned of that age, deservedly rewarded with a lodging in the holy office and thus the Hindoos now insist, that in deeming a river, a stone, a log, the Author of their being and of all their blessings—in regarding a tribe, generally the most immoral, as capable of obliterating the crimes of all the other tribes—in burning alive their widowed mothers and sisters, they are certainly right, these things were practised by their forefathers, and to question their propriety, or even to attempt to examine them, would in them be egregious arrogance.

The sources of this conduct it is not very difficult to trace. When this professed veneration for ancient folly is not a mere cloak to enable one class of society to deceive and fleece the rest, it often springs from that mistaken regard for ancestors, which, regulated by reason, becomes filial veneration, but without it, tends to make our ancestors all and our Creator nothing, to make us forget that we also are intrusted with reasoning powers, of the application of which we must give account to the Great Parent of mankind, and that each generation (and

* From Sumo, sumpsis, sumere, to take, to receive

even each individual) has a responsibility attached to itself from which no human authority can absolve it, and which no reliance on antiquity can lessen, inasmuch as former generations, even from the beginning, have been liable to be led astray by self-love, or blinded by interest, or hurried away by the impetuosity of the passions, or lulled asleep by the power of indolence. To act thus and thus, therefore, because our forefathers did the same, who were equally corrupt and fallible with ourselves, with less of experience to guide them, is in reality to renounce our own reason and to disobey our Creator and Sovereign, who has directed his commands equally to every generation, and who will judge every man according as his work shall be.

It is not always from this blind veneration for our predecessors, however, that we continue to perpetuate customs in themselves highly preposterous. Many possessed of the clearest understanding and the soundest judgment, continue to do this merely from irresolution of mind. They are convinced that the practice is wrong, they feel its absurdity, they lament its effects, but to change it requires mental labour, the greatest dread of the human mind. To express their ideas of the evils with which it is fraught, requires thought, these evils must be examined so as to be demonstrated to others, that we may justify our own conduct to them if we are able to act singly, and carry conviction to their minds if we need their concurrence. This is labour of which few minds are capable, and hence a thousand excuses are formed within. We hope the practice in question is not so injurious in reality as it appears, we at least did not originate it, wiser men than ourselves have trodden in the same path. Besides, we are not alone, in the guilt or the folly, if it be such, multitudes share as deeply as ourselves,—and we may have

comparatively but a small time longer to remain connected therewith, and what have we to do with futurity? "Let us leave the whole," says one, "to Divine Providence, which never will be remiss in watching over human affairs," or says another less devoutly inclined, "to that chance which governs all terrene objects" Thus the mind is often quieted, the conscience lulled to sleep, and the man of probity, judgment, and penetration, brought to persist in customs, which, if he could separate from himself and view only in connection with others, he would despise for their absurdity, and abhor for their injurious effect on mankind

The use of a foreign language in the judicial affairs of British India has long occupied our attention Its singular nature forced it on our minds many years ago, and induced us, from time to time, to converse on the subject with the well-informed among the Natives, as well as with various European gentlemen who, from their long residence in India, their practical knowledge, their probity of character, and their concern for the welfare of our Indian fellow-subjects, have deservedly stood high in the ranks of British India A view of the growing importance of our Indian empire, and a consideration of the indulgent manner in which the public have received discussions on various subjects relating to the happiness of our Indian fellow-subjects, have induced us at length to submit to our readers the following thoughts, in the hope that, if they produce no other effect, they may at least draw the attention of abler minds to this important subject

It is a well known fact, that while in the Supreme Court instituted for British subjects, all causes are conducted in the English language, in the Courts instituted for Natives, judicial proceedings are in general conducted in a language equally foreign to the parties, the advo-

cates, and the judges,—in the language of Persia, a kingdom distant from the seat of the British Government above two thousand miles, from which India has derived none of its laws, and with which it has scarcely a remote communication. That such an anomaly in the history of nations should exist under the British Government at the beginning of the nineteenth century, may justly furnish matter of surprise. To an examination of the reasonableness of this course and the probable effect of its being discontinued, the following pages are devoted and, in judging of its nature, we shall be much assisted by taking a view of judicial proceedings as they have been conducted among those nations most celebrated for jurisprudence in different ages of the world.

The protection of the weak from the violence of the strong, was evidently a grand object in the original formation of society. Hence judicial proceedings have in every age constituted the chief means of diffusing satisfaction and tranquillity through the various ranks of society. The formation of just laws which should be alike coercive on the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, is among the chief benefits which men receive in return for surrendering to society a portion of those rights which all possess by nature. As long as men perceive themselves surrounded by those who are restrained from injuring the property, the person, the life of their neighbour, neither by motives of feeling, nor by the fear of their common Judge, the certain persuasion that they shall not be deprived of their property because it may be the object of desire to others, or of their liberty and reputation because others may hate them, can alone furnish solid ground for individual quiet of mind and for general tranquillity. To secure this, however, the most equitable laws are not in themselves sufficient. It can be realized

by such an administration of them alone as shall create in every mind the assurance, that guilt will not be imputed on mere suspicion, that every accusation will be duly weighed, the truth or falsehood of every testimony thoroughly sifted, and such vigilance and impartiality exercised in administering laws, as will ascertain precisely the degree of guilt where it does exist, and completely defeat every malicious attempt against property or life. To secure these, every wise nation has deemed two things essential to the administration of justice, that judicial proceedings be conducted in the most public manner, and that they be in the common language of the people. In examining the judicial affairs of those nations most eminent for the equitable administration of justice, we shall find this to have been invariably the case.

If we refer to the Hebrew nation, who in jurisprudence are not only our most ancient authority, but an authority which excludes all doubt, since both their code of laws and the mode of administering them, were of Divine appointment, we have sufficient data in their records to conclude, that among them all judicial proceedings were conducted with the strictest regard to publicity. In these the gate of the city is constantly mentioned as the seat of judicial proceedings. Indeed, ages previously, Job speaks of "the gate" as the place where he put on righteousness and it clothed him, where his judgment, or judicial decisions, were to him as a robe and a diadem, because he delivered the poor that cried for justice, and the fatherless; and him that had none to help him,—while the cause that he knew not he searched out. The chief crime alleged against the Ten Tribes was, that they "turned aside the poor in the gate," and, as a proof of their forsaking it, they are exhorted "to establish judgment in the gate," which expressions sufficiently shew, that judicial proceedings

were conducted in the place of public resort. That they were conducted in the language of the nation, is so clear, that an attempt to prove it would be an insult to the understanding. Before the Captivity there was indeed no other language in which judicial proceedings had the least chance of being conducted, and after that event although the Jews were subject for centuries to the very nation whose language is adopted in our Native Judicial Courts, we have no reason to think that the Persian language was ever adopted in their courts of justice.

If we revert to the Greeks, and particularly to the Athenians, from whom the Romans, according to Livy, were not ashamed to borrow the Twelve Tables which formed the basis of their laws, we shall find these two circumstances interwoven with the whole of their administration of justice. The Court of the Areopagus, so famed throughout Greece for the justness and accuracy of its decisions, even sat in the open air, and heard causes not only in the vernacular tongue, but in the plainest possible form, "constraining whoever spoke before them," says Potter, "to represent the bare and naked truth, without any preface or epilogue, without any ornament or figures of rhetoric, or other insinuating means to win the favour or move the passions of the judges." The effect of thus eliciting judicial facts in language so perfectly intelligible to all, was, that the common citizens of Athens were found capable of sitting in the courts of justice without any previous legal instruction. The judges were chosen out of the citizens without any distinction of quality, the lowest being admitted by Solon to determine causes, if above thirty and of unblameable character. Hence such of the citizens as were at leisure to hear and determine causes, delivered in their names for

admission into all the courts, with the exception of the Areopagus.

The case with the Persian nation under Cyrus and his successors was nearly the same. The same care to bring judicial proceedings within the knowledge of all, was visible both in promulgating and administering the laws, every thing was conducted with the strictest regard to publicity, and to the people's having justice administered in the language they best understood.

If we come to Rome, which in point of jurisprudence has given the tone to nearly the whole of the European world, we shall find precisely the same care to give to their judicial proceedings the utmost publicity. It was in the audience of the common people that those Prætors sat and determined causes, whose decisions are to this day treasured up as part of the Civil Law, and if Cicero delivered his orations for Muræna, Cornelius, and Milo, those admirable compositions, before a select number of judges, it was still in the language understood by every Roman.

If we trace Roman jurisprudence down to the sixth century, the æra of Justinian, who, collecting all the laws of his predecessors, formed the Code, the Institutions, and the Pandects which bear his name, we shall find these promulgated in the vernacular tongue of the Romans. Whatever translation of the Code, the Pandects, or the Institutions of Justinian might have been made into Greek for the use of the Eastern part of the empire, in the existence of these works in the Latin language to this day, and in the numerous maxims of the Civil Law constantly quoted in that language, we have full proof that they were promulgated throughout the Western part of the empire in its own vernacular language. That the judicial proceedings themselves, therefore, were in the language of the

people, follows so much of course, that to attempt the proof of this fact would be a complete waste of time

We have thus traced the history of jurisprudence through the most celebrated nations of antiquity, and even as low as the sixth century, without discovering a vestige of the practice which forms the subject of this essay. If we recur to our own Saxon ancestors, to whom Britain is indebted for the most valuable part of her laws, as well as for her inestimable constitution, we shall find the same principle of good sense uniformly prevailing. To Alfred so justly termed the Great, the institutor of the trial by jury, it seemed absolutely necessary that the code of laws which he compiled should be in the common language of the kingdom, as well as the administration of these laws. The same feeling governed his successors Athelstan, Edmund the Elder, and Edgar, by whom this code was enlarged. Nor did Canute venture to alter either the language in which the laws were promulgated, or that in which they were administered. Yet he might have furnished himself with a strong plea for such an innovation. He had obtained the kingdom by conquest, and not only was the Danish language the vernacular tongue of himself and his followers, with whom he naturally filled his court and the chief places of trust in the kingdom, but that of various colonies of Danes who in the course of nearly two hundred years had settled in different parts of England. Up to the eleventh century of the Christian æra, then, we have no reason to believe that in any kingdom, either of Europe or Western Asia, and we may add, of Eastern Asia, was a foreign language used in judicial proceedings.

We now come within view of the only two innovations of this nature that we recollect having been ever made, one in Europe, the other in India. That in Europe oc-

curied in the year 1081, when William the Conqueror commanded all judicial proceedings throughout England to be conducted in Norman French, instead of the Anglo-Saxon or English language, in which they had been hitherto conducted even in his reign. It is proper to add, however, that this was not attempted till fifteen years after the battle which conferred on him the title of Conqueror. Nor was this a solitary act of tyranny: the despotic prince did not venture on this step till after he had forbidden his English subjects, throughout the kingdom, the light even of a taper after eight in the evening,—till to satiate his resentment he had rendered the country between York and Durham a perfect desert for sixty miles round, by which act thousands of houseless wanderers perished through hunger and cold, and to gratify his love of hunting had depopulated thirty-six parishes in Hampshire, to the destruction of thousands more,—nor till he had previously dispossessed the greater part of the English nobility and gentry of their estates, and bestowed them on his Norman followers in such profusion, that to one of them, Robert Fitzgibbon, were given no less than three hundred and sixty manors. That such a monarch should make a change in the administration of justice which filled all England with disaffection, is certainly no wonder, particularly when it gratified the vanity of himself and his followers. But relative to this change, there are two things which ought to be mentioned.

and these again to their vassals, who thus pervaded every part of the kingdom. This, however, was not the first appearance of the Norman language in England. Ethelred had married Emma, the sister of Richmond Duke of Normandy, nearly eighty years before this period, who with her attendants introduced the Norman language into Ethelred's court and her son, afterwards Edward the Confessor, took refuge in the Norman court during the continuance of the Danish dynasty, which gave him such a taste both for the language and the habits of the Normans, as caused much uneasiness to his own subjects, and ended in the introduction of the Norman dynasty.

The other circumstance is, that when William constrained his English subjects to conduct all judicial proceedings in his own tongue, he at the same time took measures to secure its being taught throughout the kingdom. Some historians say that he instituted schools for this purpose throughout England, but all agree that he ordered it to be taught in those which then existed. His object evidently was, to make it the current language of the kingdom, and the failure of this scheme with all the advantages for carrying it into execution which arose from its being for above two centuries the language of the court,—of all public transactions,—of judicial proceedings,—of nearly all the landed proprietors and a great part of the common people, sufficiently evinces the futility of any attempt to change the language spoken by the great bulk of a people. The event proved, that, notwithstanding all these advantages for carrying the plan into execution, two centuries and a half, while they introduced a multitude of Norman words into the English language which it retains to this day, did so little towards rendering universally current the language itself, that Edward the Third, one of the best monarchs who ever sat on

the British throne, thought he could not gratify the wishes of his people more fully than by ordaining, as he did in the year 1362, that for the future, in the courts of justice and in all public acts, the English language should be used instead of the French or Norman introduced by William the Conqueror

This wise measure, which filled the whole kingdom with satisfaction, seems to have communicated a new impulse to the cultivation of the English language. Within a few years after this act had passed, Wickliffe, then in his thirty-eighth year, began the translation of the Scriptures into English, and Chaucer, the father of English poetry, who lived till the reign of Henry the Fourth, with Sir John Gower, began to try the powers of the language in various kinds of verse. How far this measure actually encouraged these our earliest English authors, we will not take on ourselves to say, but that the restoration of our language to its due place in the courts of justice and in all public acts had this tendency, will be disputed, we believe, by few. Such a step invariably tends to refine a language, by bringing it into continual use among the

before the reign of Edward the Third, and whether the language would have attained its present richness and high cultivation, had it to this day been excluded from every polite circle, from the courts of judicature, and all public proceedings, any one can judge who is acquainted with the nature of language and of the human mind.

The Asiatic instance we have of this nature, is that furnished by the Mussulman dynasty in India. At what period the Mussulmans constrained the inhabitants of Bengal and Hindoost'han to conduct all their judicial proceedings in a foreign language, it is not easy to say, but the first invasion of India by Mahmood the Great, which led to this result, happened a few years before the period when the English were thus constrained to admit a foreign tongue into their judicial proceedings. Thus the only innovations of this nature which have ever happened among the nations of Europe or Asia, originated within a century of each other, and precisely from the same cause, the unfeeling folly of their lawless conquerors. The vast empire of China has been subjugated by various powers, and among others by that very dynasty which fixed this galling yoke on the neck of India, but neither its Mussulman nor Tartar conquerors ever ventured to introduce a foreign language into its judicial proceedings, or even to promulgate its laws in any other language than Chinese, although there are few languages less inviting to a foreign conqueror, or which involve a greater degree of labour in the acquisition. This tribute of labour, these conquerors have however been constrained to yield, as the price of their quiet and secure occupation of the empire, nor has the present Tartar dynasty, in particular, refused it to the genius of the country,—and nearly two centuries of quiet enjoyment have evinced the wisdom of the measure.

If India, however, was constrained to receive this mark of vassalage at the same time with England, she never, like England, enjoyed a paternal sovereign, who, entering into her circumstances, restored her language and literature to their natural course. This glory seems reserved for the British nation, whom four centuries have rendered well able to appreciate the value of this blessing from the high privileges it has conferred on themselves. That after having once imposed this mark of foreign servitude, the Mussulman dynasty should ever be inclined to remove it, was by no means to be expected. After having shewn an utter disregard to the feelings of the conquered in violating and pillaging so many of their richest temples, and cruelly slaughtering so many of the brahmanic tribe, it will excite little surprise that they should render perpetual this new mark of subjection, too evident to be concealed, and too deep in its effects not to be continually felt, particularly when it gratified their own feelings in proportion as it distressed the conquered nation. And that this measure constantly nourished the indolence, vanity, and oppression of their conquerors, a slight view of its operation will be sufficient to convince us. This language was *their* vernacular tongue, to transact judicial business therein cost them no study, no labour, while it gratified their natural fondness for their own language. The pains and labour it cost the vanquished to acquire it, naturally fed their vanity. Every degree of embarrassment felt, every sigh uttered in consequence, was a fresh acknowledgement of the conqueror's power, which could constrain them to suffer all this almost without daring to murmur. It also tended to feed a spirit of oppression. To the man capable of injuring his neighbour, courts of justice are by no means desirable, they are altogether a remora in his way. It is natural for him to wish them annihilated, or,

what is nearly the same thing, rendered inaccessible. It is to the oppressed that courts of justice are interesting, and these, in India, were not very likely to be found among their Mussulman conquerors. That a Hindoo might never oppress a Mussulman, even in these circumstances, we will not affirm, but we think that for one case wherein the conquerors were oppressed by the conquered, a multitude would occur wherein the Hindoo would be the sufferer. The advantage which this introduction of their own language into the courts of justice would give the Mussulman defendant over the Hindoo plaintiff, are sufficiently obvious. If the latter found no difficulty in getting his case accurately represented in this foreign language, if his Mussulman translator narrated every particular with perfect exactness, and so entered into his case as to delineate even its very spirit, which however could scarcely be expected from every mercenary translator, still what an advantage must the aggressor enjoy in speaking the same language with his judge, and striking terror into the trembling plaintiff by appearing one with him! What advantage must he derive from being able to represent his case to his countrymen with the living voice, and so to observe the air, the feeling, the spirit of his judge, as to turn it to the utmost advantage by enforcing one fact, discolouring another, and extenuating a third, while the poor plaintiff's *written* case remained susceptible of no addition, whatever the circumstances of the trial might demand! Surely, in a multitude of instances, these circumstances must have deterred an oppressed Hindoo from bringing his complaint before a judge with whom his oppressor could converse familiarly in his own language. And when it did not wholly suppress all complaint, the meagre and inadequate manner in which it must appear in a foreign language, of which the

oppressed knew so little, and in which he could neither check the partial dealing of his hired advocate, nor detect an inadequate or a wrong representation, would render it almost impossible for his cause to come in its full force before his foreign judge. All these circumstances would be so much clear gain to those who wished to oppress, and that in these circumstances the conquering nation should feel no wish to remove this yoke from the conquered whom they affected to detest as unbelievers, will excite no surprise.

That this practice, however, which so evidently owed its origin to the caprice of the Mussulman conquerors of India, and its continuance to their disregard of its happiness, should have been continued by a Government, who, instead of disregarding the feelings of the people, delight in promoting their happiness, is perhaps one of the most extraordinary facts recorded in the annals of history, particularly when the English had formerly been in the same circumstances themselves, and had found them intolerable. It can be accounted for only on the principle that while the human mind shrinks as long as possible from the formidable task of investigation, the circumstances in which the British Government have hitherto been placed, have been such as scarcely to bring the subject fully before them. It is little more than sixty years since judicial duties relative to the natives began first to devolve upon them. They were by no means called at once to the awful trust of administering justice to Sixty Millions of Indian subjects, had they, no doubt all circumstances would have been weighed in the most careful manner. But instead of this, the important duty has devolved upon them by almost imperceptible degrees, and they can scarcely have been said to have entered fully thereon till within the last two or three years. It was the successful termina-

tion of the late war which invested them with the full extent of judicial duty, and laid it on them as a sacred charge to administer justice to nearly the whole of the nations formerly subject to the family of Timur. But to accomplish at once all that may appear desirable, is seldom within the power of the best of men. It was not till we had possessed Bengal and Bahar for twenty years, that the Supreme Court was established in India for British subjects, a court which, while it has established on the firmest basis the reputation of British jurisprudence throughout India, has so interwoven itself with all our ideas, that we are now scarcely able to picture to ourselves the former state of things when no court of this nature existed in India. Nor, when the custom we have been describing shall be abolished, and sixty millions of men shall be restored to the privilege (if it be not rather the natural right) of having the claims preferred against their property, and the accusations levelled at their lives, investigated in the language spoken by themselves, (an event which reason forbids our contemplating as very far distant,) will it be scarcely believed that the contrary practice was ever suffered to exist under a British Government. When that period shall have arrived, our past conduct in this instance will be contemplated with wonder. We shall appear to have been the most singular and the most disinterested of all conquerors. "Had they," will by-standers say, "conducted judicial proceedings in a foreign tongue, why was not *their own* introduced? If the language of judicial proceedings were foreign to the people, why should it have been equally foreign to the judges? We can easily appreciate the motives of the Mussulman dynasty for depriving the people of this important privilege, the introduction of their own language flattered their national vanity, gratified their love of ease,

and perhaps furnished a harvest for cupidity and oppression. But the British Government can have been actuated by none of these motives, they have gratified no national vanity by the introduction of their own language, they have no desire to oppress, and instead of consulting their own ease, they have laid on themselves a burden more ponderous than that lying on the natives, for their love of justice constrains them to cultivate the language of a kingdom with which they have scarcely any connection, to such a degree as not only to enter minutely into every complaint and accusation brought before them, but to watch therein over a body of native law-officers on whose incorruptibility they can have little reliance."

Had the conduct of the Mussulman conquerors of India been deemed a proper subject for imitation, we are ourselves decidedly of opinion, that the imitation ought to have been in favour of our own language. For thus acting we should have had reasons equally valid with those of the Mussulman dynasty. English was our language, and we, as well as they, wished to see things with our own eyes without the trouble of learning another language at the age of maturity, and as the Hindoos had been accustomed to the yoke, what greater injustice in their receiving a language from their European than from their Asiatic conquerors? Moreover, the advantage to us would have been great. Had every accusation, every deposition, every judicial fact and document, been brought into plain English, the judicial affairs of India would have appeared transparent to every British judge, whatever labour this might have cost the natives. And when it would have enabled those who dispense justice to the country, to understand every thing with the glance of the eye, there would have been at least one evident reason for the measure, the comfort and information of the rulers would

have been secured, if the great bulk of the people would have remained, *as they now are*, perfectly ignorant of the process by which truth had been elicited. For the equity of their decisions, they must ever be constrained to confide implicitly in the judge as long as judicial proceedings are conducted in a foreign language, and indeed, while the language is foreign to him, as well as themselves, a far greater degree of confidence is requisite. Too much praise cannot be given to those who from the beginning of our empire in India have so applied to this language as to render it almost their own,—every hour's labour given to it is a monument of their love of justice, and of their humane feeling toward those who repose in them alone for protection from that judicial tyranny to which they were subject under the Mussulman dynasty. Still this language can never have that attraction for a Briton which he finds in his mother tongue. Application thereto is still a duty to be performed, not an amusement to be enjoyed. To this language a man applies at the call of conscience and honour, in his mother tongue he indulges when completely wearied with official duties. The consequence is, therefore, with the most vigorous minds, that ten times the matter will be examined in our native tongue with scarcely a consciousness of labour. This would enable a man to understand what comes before him in his vernacular tongue equally well with a tenth of the fatigue,—or with the same labour, ten times as well, from the ease and pleasure with which his eye ran through details in his vernacular tongue.

Nor would the introduction of our own tongue have been without its advantages to the Hindoos themselves. Among others would have been, that of delivering them wholly from the haughty domination of their Mussulman conquerors, under which they had groaned for so

many centuries. These the introduction of our tongue would have reduced precisely to a level with the nation they had so long oppressed. If the English had so far sanctioned their system as to conduct judicial business in a foreign language, still it would not have been *theirs*. But when the British, in addition to sanctioning their conduct, adopted the very language which the Mussulman dynasty had made the means of oppression for so many ages, it requires but little knowledge of human nature to see that this furnishes them with constant matter for exultation. To say that while the Hindoos were still the conquered nation, the Mussulmans, by apparently retaining the judicial proceedings in their own hands, seemed to retain all their former ground, is saying little, they now appeared to be *exalted*, they became the Teachers and Preceptors of their rulers, on whose proficiency in the language of their dynasty it was theirs constantly to pronounce, nor would a Mussulman feel it a circumstance of trifling import to be able to say to those among whom he wished to magnify his own consequence, that "*Sahab spoke almost as well as himself*." Whoever considers the effect of this on minds of a diminutive size, can easily realize the immense weight it must throw into the scale of Mussulmans, surrounded by Hindoos accustomed for ages to crouch beneath their yoke and tremble at the sound of their language. If it was said of the Romans after they had conquered Greece, that the introduction of its language and literature made Rome almost appear the conquered country, our retaining in all judicial proceedings the language introduced into them by the Mussulman dynasty, must suggest nearly the same idea to the minds of the poor Hindoos. While their real conquerors are only known to them by their solid weight of character, and the restraint they quietly exercise over their former

oppressors, the judicial language and legal apparatus of the Mussulman dynasty still fill the eye of the Hindoo, and still give to the Mahomedans and their religion a degree of factitious importance, of which both would have been stripped long ago, had our language in all judicial and public acts been substituted for theirs. This indeed hath hitherto kept both the language and the religion of their Rulers so completely out of view, that even now, with the greater part of our Indian fellow-subjects, it is perhaps matter of doubt whether we have either of our own

But the substitution of our language for that of the Mussulman dynasty would have been to the real advantage of India. The introduction of that language has done for India literally nothing, it has improved neither its morals, its philosophy, nor its literature. For Europe the introduction of a foreign language as an object of study, has done every thing, the cultivation of Latin and Greek has refined its taste, raised its literature, and elevated its mental habits to a height before unknown in the North, and scarcely in Greece itself. But after the cultivation of Persian literature for so many ages, the mental darkness of India is as dense and as palpable as ever. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that this would have been the case had the language of the Mussulman dynasty been exchanged for that of the English, though only for the short space of half a century. Many natives would have attempted to study it, and some would have succeeded to a considerable extent. They would have read some of our best authors, and have imbibed almost insensibly a certain portion of our ideas on a multitude of subjects,—and some would no doubt have made themselves acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures. Thus English, although it would never have become the lan-

guage of possibly a single village, would have been read in Bengal to a considerable degree, the consequence of which, fraught as it is with the treasures of knowledge both human and divine, the reflecting mind may easily realize

Should any one ask, Would it have been just to impose such a load on the poor Hindoos, as to constrain them to clothe all those ideas on which their property and even their lives may depend, in an English dress, merely for the ease of their European judges?—we should reply, that on this head, we ourselves have our doubts—and for this reason we deem it still worse to impose, or even to continue that load on them, when it neither brings ease to ourselves, nor mental profit to them. Every argument against making English the language of the courts of justice and of all public acts, militates with ten-fold force against the use of any *other* foreign language, and that Persian is still and ever will be a foreign language to at least ninety-nine out of a hundred among the sixty million of our native subjects, few, we apprehend, will controvert. And still fewer will hold up the conduct of a Mussulman dynasty, now overthrown by the God of providence, as a pattern for imitation to a Christian and a British Government, to whom is consigned the guardian care of India in its stead

in them, and to all who hope to succeed to these employments, the introduction of a language foreign to the people at large can be no matter of complaint, it must on the contrary increase their profits and their importance in proportion as it renders them necessary for the translation of the smallest document. It is rather to be expected that this state of things should be to them the constant subject of panegyric, as well as that every enquiry which bears the most distant aspect towards a change, should be completely discouraged. But these are not the men for whose relief courts of justice are designed. These are seldom oppressed by their countrymen, and were they, for them to bring their action would be a high gratification, as it would be done in the language familiar to them, though not to the bulk of their countrymen. To these the courts of justice are precisely what they would be to all, were judicial proceedings conducted in the common tongue. It is for the protection of the great bulk of the people, however, that judicial courts are instituted, and from their feelings we ought to form our judgment of any judicial system. It is when we see them recoil at the idea of applying to a court of justice, because they faint under the difficulty and expense of bringing a cause forward in what is to them a foreign tongue,—when we see them submit to innumerable injuries rather than prefer their complaint, that we see something of the evils attending such a system. Should it be said, This at least represses a litigious spirit, we are deprived even of this mitigating circumstance. The litigious are precisely those who *will not* be deterred by these difficulties, and thus the hardships of the system fall on the peaceable and the industrious,—on those whom it is the wish of the laws to protect from injury.

How injurious in its effects this system has ever been,

and continues to be at the present moment, we may easily realize by picturing to ourselves the state of things as they would be in Britain, were all its judicial proceedings to be henceforth conducted in the French tongue. Who would not start back with horror at the prospect? Who would not tremble for justice, were every witness to have his deposition received by the judge in French, and through the medium of officers to whom this was not the vernacular tongue? Who would not recoil at the idea that all the comments and pleadings on this evidence were to be comprehended in all their force by the judge in French alone, to him also a foreign language? In this case, even if the judge could comprehend the whole with a glance, the bulk of the spectators would know little or nothing of the cause, nor even the poor prisoner, till the sentence of the judge given in French and explained, announced to him as the issue of the trial, which he had *seen* but not *heard*, the loss of his liberty—or even his life! How would every feeling in a British heart revolt at such a mode of conducting judicial proceedings! Even the hardship of depriving a poor prisoner of any knowledge how his cause was going on till the irrevocable decision was announced, would shock every humane mind.

Dreadful as this would be in England, however, there are circumstances in this country which augment its horrors. In the first instance, French at the present moment is understood far better in England than Persian is in Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, whatever it may be in the upper provinces. In England almost every girl at a school of any respectability can read French. But if we except those employed in the courts of justice, whose business it is to make it their study, but whom we do not expect to furnish a very great crop of prisoners guilty of felony, or even of plaintiffs dispossessed of their rights, who among

the poor natives studies Persian so as to comprehend it when spoken, or even to understand it if read by themselves? Yet, as has been already intimated, these form the great mass to whom courts of justice are interesting, as their grand defence against oppression and fraud. Exclusive of judicial and public men, for one person who understands Persian among the natives, there are probably twenty in England who understand French. Yet who in Britain could reconcile himself to the thought that no trial respecting property or life should ever be again held in the English tongue?

But this might be done in Britain with unspeakably greater safety, than judicial proceedings can be conducted in a foreign tongue in British India. In probity and incorruptness will any one presume to compare the native law-officers of India with the English Bar, which at the present moment exhibits such bright examples of courage, generosity, and incorruptible integrity? What are the officers of the native courts, from the highest to the lowest? Does not every hope of obtaining justice centre wholly in the presiding European Magistrates? Were these taken away, does any one suppose that the native law-officers would be found changed in principle from what they were under the Mussulman dynasty? What should have created this change? from whence can it have arisen? We cannot suppose such a mighty effect to have been produced without some adequate cause, but what cause can be at all named?—and we may ask, what native ever reckons on the incorruptibility of native judicial officers? Surely, in impartiality, in the diligent investigation of truth, in faithfulness to their clients, these native lawyers are not to be named with the members of the English bar. Yet with all this faithfulness to a client's interest, this diligence, this incorruptness of principle, would the con-

ducting of judicial proceedings in French, the language of a kingdom parted from Britain only by a channel of seven leagues, and with which she has daily intercourse, be satisfactory to the people at large? To settle this point for ever respecting India, we have only to recollect this fact, and to combine therewith that golden rule which is the glory of our religion. "*Do unto others as ye would men should do unto you*"

In the present state of things, when by the happy termination of the late war, the British empire in India has, it may be presumed, attained to its full size, an opportunity seems afforded for its judicial affairs to assume that form which shall most fully provide for the happiness of the millions now confided to the care of Britain. It may now, therefore, become a proper subject for consideration, whether reason and justice sanction the continuance of judicial proceedings in a foreign language? and even if this be the case, whether sound policy and the best interests of the country plead for the continuance of them in a language equally foreign to the rulers themselves and the people whose judicial concerns are transacted?

On this last question we do not hesitate to say, that if it be right to retain a foreign language in judicial proceedings and all public business, that language ought to be our own vernacular tongue, rather than that of the former dynasty. With the exception of those employed in the native courts, Persian is as much a foreign language to the people of India as it was a century ago, and we have already shown that courts of justice are not instituted for the sake of the officers retained in them, but for the people at large. If it be reasonable, therefore, to employ any foreign language, it is more reasonable that we employ our own, than one foreign to us as well as to the people. If the Mussulman dynasty acted rightly in employing

the Persian language, it is not equally right that we should retain it. It was the language in which they conversed with each other, and in which all their literature was contained. But this is not the case with us, Persian is not the language in which we converse with each other, nor is it the depository of our literature. To employ it, therefore, instead of our own is a peculiar hardship on the nation confided to our care. It has been already urged, that it does not place them on a level, it gives the Mussulman a very great superiority over the Hindoo by continuing the language of his dynasty in all judicial proceedings, but surely under a paternal government, if they are not placed perfectly on a level, the oppressed are the nation to be exalted, rather than their former oppressors.

But to conduct judicial proceedings in a *foreign* language, and that not our own, is an act of injustice to the natives. If they are subjected to the labour and disadvantage of a foreign tongue, this, when acquired, ought to afford them the most unrestrained intercourse with their rulers, and to lay open to them all their literary treasures. These advantages the study of Persian did confer on them under the Mussulman dynasty. As it was the vernacular tongue of their conquerors, a knowledge of it, when acquired, enabled them to enjoy an unrestrained communication of feelings and ideas with the whole body of their rulers, and although the Persian language has done so little towards dispelling the darkness of India, yet whatever it did possess of amusement, or of elegance, the conquered, on gaining it, participated with the conquerors. It furnished them with one common subject of conversation, and enabled them to interchange ideas whenever circumstances brought them into contact. But of all this the natives are now deprived. After having ac-

quired Persian, a native may, it is true, converse therein with those gentlemen whose official situation constrains them constantly to speak that language, yet even then, as it is not the vernacular tongue of either, there cannot be that spontaneous flow of idea which is inseparable from our own tongue. With those English gentlemen who are not accustomed to converse in that language, his labour and pains in acquiring it are useless, he cannot hold the least conversation with them, unless through some other medium.

But in making them acquainted with the Literature of their rulers, Persian does nothing whatever. After having acquired by hard study the language in which all judicial proceedings and public business are conducted, the poor native does not thereby gain the knowledge of one historical fact, or one idea, in common with his rulers. This system thus imposes on them the labour of a whole life, without the prospect of acquiring a single new idea to enlarge their minds or cheer the mental gloom in which they are enveloped. This is the more to be regretted, because of the vast difference between the literature of the two dynasties. In the English language are now embodied the classic treasures of the ancients, the rich inventions of the moderns, the soundest ideas respecting human life, and the glories of the unseen world. To all this, on the present system, the natives have a full right. If they are debarred the privilege of having the most interesting concerns of human life conducted in their own language, that foreign tongue which they are constrained to learn for this purpose, ought to lay open to them in return all the knowledge possessed by the ruling dynasty. To continue the language of the former dynasty as the medium for public business, foreign as it still is to the natives, and as it will be when ages more have passed

away, exceedingly increases the severity of the system, they have to endure all its hardships, without reaping any of its advantages. If it be right, therefore, to constrain sixty millions of people to seek justice in a language which the great bulk of them will never understand, while wisdom requires that the present vestige of Mahometan tyranny should be no longer suffered to remain, equity demands that the foreign system retained, should at once lay open to the natives all those treasures of knowledge which are contained in the language of their rulers — But while we are of opinion that if any foreign language be employed in judicial proceedings, it ought to be our own, the following reasons seem to require that judicial business be conducted in the common language of the people

1. *This is the dictate of justice and equity, against which all other things ought to weigh nothing.* To conduct judicial affairs which may affect the property or even the life of any one individual among sixty millions in a language foreign to them, is an unnatural state of things, never realized but by monarchs who sacrifice the happiness of their people to their own gratification. The Norman dynasty in England and the Mussulman in India, furnish almost the only examples found of this practice in the annals of history, but in the former instance the yoke was found intolerable, and was taken off by a monarch of the same dynasty, to the unspeakable advantage of our native land. India, then, is the only nation on earth now left in these circumstances. Even to publish laws in a language not understood by the great bulk of the people, is esteemed iniquitous. Caligula, for writing his edicts which he was constrained to expose to public view, in a character so small that they could scarcely be read, incurred the imputation of inhumanity. This imputation,

groundless as it may have been,¹ sufficiently furnishes us with the general opinion on the subject of promulgating laws. But to publish laws in a language foreign to the people, is unspeakably less injurious than to conduct judicial proceedings therein. The true sense of the statute will soon be known in some way or other, and once known, it will serve for a thousand cases. Not so with judicial proceedings in a foreign language: if the truth has been exactly ascertained in ten thousand instances, the very next case will involve quite as much of doubt and uncertainty, as though it were the first ever examined. It is not the meaning of a law which is to be ascertained, but dubious facts, of which some affirm and others deny the existence. Surely, to detect falsehood and put malice to shame in any country, all that aid is needed which can be afforded by public investigation in the common language. How much more, then, in India, where the character of the natives is by no means high for probity—Nor can the natives avoid observing, that in the Supreme Court the English themselves enjoy this privilege. They see that when an Englishman is tried, the evidence is delivered, the counsel plead, and the judges declare their opinion of his guilt or innocence, in his vernacular tongue. The natives, on witnessing this, may naturally ask. “Why may not we enjoy the same privilege when we need it so much more? What¹ are the English law-officers more susceptible of corruption than ours, that they are constrained to give all their ideas and views of a case in the plainest English? But even if they were, the English possess an advantage we have not, they have twelve men whom they are obliged to make acquainted with their every idea on a case, and then leave them to decide whether the charge against the prisoner be true or false. If with all these advantages,

and their high character for incorruptness, they are still constrained to bring every thing into the language of the British prisoner,—how can our judicial proceedings be conducted safely in a foreign language, when the character of our native law-officers is so different?"


2 We are convinced that *granting them this favour would rivet the British Government in the affections of their Indian subjects* Our restoring to them this important privilege of which the Mussulman dynasty deprived them, must secure their affection it would remove from them a most grievous badge of slavery, and in the most interesting concerns of life, confer on them a degree of happiness not enjoyed by their ancestors for many generations The effect of this privilege on their minds could not be speedily lost its continual recurrence would constrain them to reflect, that they owe it to the humane consideration of their British Rulers, and that the continuance of this and a multitude of other blessings must depend on the stability of the British Government. This, therefore, would attach them to their present rulers, in a degree scarcely to be described Nothing is so gratifying to a people as the employment of their own language by their conquerors Of this the Chinese afford a striking proof They have undergone various revolutions, and different dynasties have filled the throne, but no attempt has ever been made to change the language of their judicial or public proceedings, nor that in which their laws are promulgated. The present Tartar dynasty have so far adopted the Chinese language as their own, as to promulgate all their edicts therein, and the most magnificent dictionary of its language which China has ever seen; was compiled by order of the third Emperor of this family. This attention to their language has imparted a stability to the throne, which their being Tartars, of a dif-

ferent religion, and some of them sufficiently weak, have not been able to shake, while an attempt to introduce a foreign language would have made their throne totter to its very base

3 *The conducting of judicial proceedings in the common language will be a clear gain annually to the cause of justice* If the study of Persian have so completely counteracted the native disposition, as to eradicate from the minds of those officers who have to bring the cause therein before the judge, all that propensity to take advantage of circumstances, and render them a source of profit, which is known to exist throughout the country, still, when evidence taken from the mouth of witnesses must be laid before the judge in another language, the omission of a single word, or the use of a word either too strong or too weak, may give a complexion to a cause which shall make it appear totally different it may constrain the most upright judge, as he can only judge according to the evidence before him, from a sense of justice to decide on the cause differently from its real merits Cases of this nature may occur where there is no want of probity in the translator A degree of carelessness in selecting the words to express this evidence in another language, is quite sufficient, and who that knows the carelessness and apathy of the native character, will wonder if this should be often the case where there is no intention to misrepresent? But in this case the most upright judge is constrained to give a wrong sentence even from principle If we consider this, and sum up the aggregate of the causes which may be thus mistaken in the Fifty-two Native Courts of this Presidency in one year only, can we deny that for judicial proceedings to be conducted in the language common to all parties, will be a clear gain to the cause of justice, even supposing all the native law-

officers to be as pure as the driven snow? But if they are like their countrymen with whom we have to transact business daily, and on whose representations we can never depend where a rupee is to be gained by misrepresentation, what must be the gain to justice throughout India, of conducting judicial business in the common language, as in England, which places detection within the power of all, and holds forth falsehood to public execration!

In addition to these, certain collateral advantages would follow by no means to be despised. The conducting of judicial proceedings in the common language would exceedingly increase the esteem of the natives for those gentlemen who preside in the Native Courts throughout India. That this is now great, follows of course, from the character they so justly sustain. But at present they are far from reaping all those advantages to which their knowledge, their probity, and their high sense of character entitle them. If they are now esteemed, they would then be revered, and the confidence reposed in them by the natives would be almost unbounded. On the present system they are deprived of the most valuable opportunities of making themselves intimately acquainted with the concerns of the natives. They transact business officially with them several hours daily, but it is in a language understood by not one in twenty in their district, and, often through a circle who have a kind of interest in monopolizing their attention,—or in persuading the natives of the district that such is the case. Hence, justly as they esteem the British judge, the bulk of the natives seldom see him but at a distance, nor converse with him but through those around him. The effect of this in keeping him from an intimate knowledge of their concerns, must be sufficiently obvious



Although the College of Fort William has appointed that every gentleman shall be proficient in *two* languages, one beside Persian, yet as this is the language of business in which five or six hours daily must be employed, though little known beyond the official circle except by a few rich Mussulmans who pride themselves in the language as theirs, the time thus spent is almost so much clear loss to the common language of the people, particularly in Bengal. The strength and spirits being exhausted every day in the official language, it cannot be expected that in this ungenial clime, European gentlemen, fatigued with their daily duties, should as an amusement turn to a tongue neither necessary as an official nor respectable as a learned language. In these circumstances that a man

tion, watch with anxious eye every step of the cause, and hang on the lips of the judge, while he, in accents familiar to them, poured forth those dictates of equity, those views of justice, and that sound knowledge of things, in which he would be necessarily so much their superior. This would so raise him in the esteem of the people, that they would almost regard him as something beyond a man. There is scarcely any thing more fascinating to the natives than the equitable and wise administration of justice. of this they feel the value far beyond Europeans, possibly from the weakness of their own minds, and the consciousness of what it would cost them thus to act. The British judge, therefore, in whose every judicial observation a love of equity so evidently shone, would be revered by them. Other circumstances would increase this feeling the knowledge that he could and would converse with a native in his own dialect without any intervening medium, would encourage respectable natives to bring to him their distresses, perhaps important for him to know, and would make him regarded as the parental friend of all around, indeed the mere knowledge of this fact in a district where a multitude of inferior native magistrates must be employed, would operate in the most salutary manner. Further, his hearing daily the common language spoken in court by such a variety of persons, would so familiarize it to him, that he could scarcely go out, either for business or pleasure, without understanding every thing he heard around him, and the insight this would give him, without effort, into all the concerns of the people whose legal guardian he stood forth, could not fail to be very great. The value of a hundred European gentlemen stationed throughout the country, possessing such an intimate acquaintance with the concerns of the natives and enjoying their confidence

in so peculiar a degree, can scarcely be calculated, particularly in seasons of distress and calamity

The other collateral advantage is, that this would tend to improve and enlighten the country in a superior degree. Of every advance of this nature the common language must be the medium, but how this can be when it is cultivated neither in the services of religion, at the bar, nor in the public business of government, it is difficult to say. Yet this at present is the case with the Bengalee language in particular. In their religious services the brahmîns affect to despise it, although the greater part of them are quite unable to understand the *Sungskrita* sentences they daily repeat in their religious formulas, and when it is excluded also from the courts of justice, what inducement can there be to cultivate it? Yet it begins to be cultivated notwithstanding every disadvantage, and the native press is daily becoming more and more interesting. But what an impulse would be given to its cultivation were it made the language of all the native courts in Bengal, may be inferred from the cultivation given the English language since it has been made the only vehicle for the administration of justice. Let it only be known, that instead of Persian, a thorough and classic knowledge of Bengalee is the indispensable qualification for every judicial situation in the native courts throughout Bengal, and that learning and probity alone will avail, whether found in a Hindoo, a Mahometan, or a Christian, and a new scene will instantly appear. Not only will all who obtain judicial situations be thus qualified, but a multitude more will qualify themselves, from a distant hope of obtaining them. If we estimate the various courts of justice as employing a thousand persons, we may be assured that five thousand will study with the hope of being employed. Nor will the unsuccessful candidates be at liberty to in-

termut the classic study of the language, their being always in expectation of vacancies will constantly stir them up to exertion. Thus, in addition to those formed by other means, will five thousand accurate Bengalee scholars be created by this step alone. This would also *refine* the language its being brought into the judicial courts and made the language of record, must secure its superior cultivation, and European gentlemen, would bring thereto all their taste and grammatical knowledge, which must have its re-action on the natives, the consequence of which would be, that the language would be rendered a luminous medium of communicating ideas to nearly twenty millions of people. Important works constantly translated into this language, would enlighten the minds of the people beyond any other course. While we acknowledge that the introduction of English would do much, the cultivation of their own tongue would do unspeakably more. Compared with the bulk of the population, only a few would so learn the language as to read an English author with profit, and, when they died, their knowledge would die with them, others must go over the same ground to understand English equally well. The greatest portion of good must ever be done through the medium of the native language. But while its being still neglected would naturally leave it in its present rude state, the introduction of English would so deteriorate it as to render it almost unintelligible.

Indeed, were English understood by the natives as well as Bengalee, as a means of imbibing ideas this would, at present, be scarcely desirable. While the English language is fraught with every thing excellent, it also contains much that would be of little service to the native mind in its present uninformed state. There are many things, even in the English papers of the day, which a

Hindoo in his present state of mind could not read with profit. That knowledge of English, therefore, which would throw open to a native every thing printed in England from week to week and from month to month, could it by miracle be imparted to a million within a month, we should hesitate to pronounce a real advantage to the country. Some previous cultivation of mind seems quite necessary to enable a Hindoo to form a just idea of the various writings which might come before him. In cultivating the native language, their present circumstances might be met. No real friend to India would translate a work for general perusal which he thought might mislead or misinform their minds, and a judicious selection would put them in possession of the works best suited to their state. These, when once printed, must become accessible to millions, and such valuable information would lead to solid mental improvement, which must naturally increase the desire for information, and thus the country might be gradually filled with light. While this could never impart to them either the physical strength or the vigour of mind possessed by Europeans, it would rescue them from ten thousand destructive errors, and place them among the happiest of mankind.

To this course a host of objections may possibly arise. We imagine, however, that the chief will be found to be these three. "It would discourage the study of the Persian language,—impede the despatch of judicial business,—and subject a British judge to the labour of acquiring two or three languages on his removal from one part of the country to another." The first of these objections, we presume, has little foundation. For diplomatic purposes, in all those native courts where Persian is the grand medium of intercourse, this language will be cultivated, as French is in Europe, and, as an

language, it will be cultivated by the man of taste. Should any one object that this would do little towards keeping up the study of Persian, we should reply, that if the cultivation of a language for taste and usefulness be not sufficient to keep it alive, it ought to die. To us it does seem a little hard to subject the lives or the property of sixty millions of men to perpetual danger, as a kind of school exercise to keep up the knowledge of a foreign language. If judicial business must be perverted from its original design to serve mere philological purposes, the Persian does not seem the best language which could be chosen. The introduction of Chinese as the language of judicial business would much more effectually promote activity of mind, while it possesses advantages of which Persian is destitute. It is far more ancient, it contains a number of the most ancient writings in the world, and a most admirable code of laws, which forms the medium of administering justice to at least a hundred and fifty millions of people. Besides, it is not the language of a very distant nation. Sir William Jones remarked long ago that the Chinese were little more than two hundred leagues distant from the capital of our Eastern empire, and, in some future time, circumstances may possibly bring us and them much more nearly into contact. But if this be thought objectionable, and jurisprudence must still be transformed into a means of encouraging Oriental philology, no step would realize this object more effectually than the introduction of *Sanskrit* as the judicial language of India. This, indeed, seems to come recommended with peculiar force while it would effectually secure philological exertion in the native law-officers, as well as in the British judges, it is the learned language of India, understood and venerated in every province, the origin of all its dialects, and the language of the greater

part of its laws, and surely "the language of the gods" must be acceptable to their votaries. If, then, the native administration of justice must be rendered subservient to philology, it may certainly be applied to nobler objects than the cultivation of the Persian language. But if it appear absurd to sacrifice the judicial affairs of sixty millions to the cultivation of any language, as it would certainly be deemed absurd at home to make French or Latin the language of our courts of justice with this view, we must satisfy ourselves with securing one object at once, content, like the courts in England, with securing the best administration of justice, though, in doing it, no language should be cultivated beside the common tongue. It is seldom that more than one important object can be secured by one operation. That course which aims at two, seldom effectually promotes either.

"But," say others, "to conduct judicial proceedings in the common language instead of Persian, would impede business in a very high degree." Were this the case to a certain extent, still, as in judicial matters there is a possibility of making greater haste than good speed, this might not be a real evil. "Once well done is twice done," is not wholly inapplicable to judicial affairs. We cannot but think, however, that in this there must be some mistake. Can the examination of a cause in two languages be ultimately done more quickly than in one of them? The facts must be obtained from the witnesses in their own language, before they can be given in Persian, and surely their being understood at once by the judge and the court, without an intervening translation, could not in its own nature delay business. "But," say some, "it actually does for we have tried both ways, and we have despatched three causes in Persian in the time occupied by only two in Bengalee." That is, you employed Ben-

galce scholars perfectly new to judicial proceedings, and these men occupied one-third more of time, than those who in Persian had been accustomed to legal details possibly for thirty years. "Nay," says another, "you are quite mistaken, we employed these very men who had been accustomed to law proceedings in Persian, to make the experiment in Bengalee." If this were the case, the matter explains itself. These men occupied one-third more of time in reading documents in Bengalee, to which they had been so little accustomed, and in which they perhaps felt no wish to expedite business, than in Persian, to which they had been accustomed all their lives. We cannot think that in either case this could be a fair trial. Let men be equally well instructed in Bengalee, and accustomed to legal details an equal length of time, and we cannot but believe, that the conducting of causes in one language must ultimately *expedite* business, and that in no unimportant degree.

We come to a more serious objection. "Different languages are spoken in different parts of the British dominions in India, hence a gentleman in the judicial line, removed from one part to another, might in the course of twenty years possibly have two or even three dialects to learn." That there are different languages spoken in the British dominions, is matter for sincere satisfaction, not merely because it marks the goodness of Divine Providence to the British nation, which we regard as an extension of blessing to the country,—but because it contributes to the stability and tranquillity of the British empire in India. These languages are so many walls of brass to insulate these various nations from each other. This was formerly the case in the British Isles long after they became subject to the same monarch. An inhabitant of the north side of the Tweed had no national feelings in

common with a southron, nor was an inhabitant of Ireland capable of being affected with the same feelings which inflamed the breast of a north or a south Briton. In the affair of Runnymede we know not that a single Irish baron was engaged, although this was the third reign since Ireland had become subject to England. This argued no want of patriotism, it only demonstrated that a separate province and language completely insulate national feelings. In the same manner a native of Bengal has few feelings in common with a native of Orissa; nor a native of Hindoost'han with a native of Bengal. By a different language feelings are stopped in the midway, and completely quenched. This insures public peace beyond what many would conceive. In the hands of a wise and paternal government, the preservation of tranquillity throughout the British empire in India, in its present extended state, is thus rendered far more easy than as though it included Bengal alone. In the latter case fourteen or sixteen millions speaking one language might haply receive one impulse, however foolish and misguided, without a counterpoise being any where possessed. But, in the present state, were Orissa to become a prey to anarchy, Bengal on the one side, and the Decan on the other, speaking different languages, would form an instant counterpoise, were Bengal, there would be the Decan on the one side, and the provinces of Hindoost'han on the other, and thus with the rest of the British empire in India. We may, therefore, cheerfully submit to the labour of acquiring these separate languages, in consideration of the advantage it affords for the preservation of peace and public tranquillity. Till the minds of the natives shall have become more enlightened and humanized, no wise man would wish to see these useful barriers abolished.

The difficulty of learning two or even three of these dialects, however, is far less than is generally imagined. Let two of these languages be appointed in College as the term of qualification, of which let one be the Bengalee, or the Orissa if the person's views be toward that country. These two languages, through the length and variety of their grammatical terminations, are the hardest of acquisition, but when one of these is acquired, as they contain at least nine out of ten of the words used in the other dialects spoken in this Presidency, there would be no difficulty in acquiring any other. a little application to its peculiar grammatical terminations, and the daily practice of the court, would render it familiar, and, acquainted previously with nine-tenths of the words, a gentleman would then be in possession of the language. As Bengal contains the greatest number of judicial situations, a greater number of gentlemen probably begin their judicial career in Bengal than in Hindoost'han and to any man thoroughly versed in Bengalee, a little study, combined with the practice daily afforded by his official duties, would enable him to understand every thing he heard in Hindee, as well as to deliver his own ideas therein. But if he studied Hindee in the College as well as Bengalee, he would find little difficulty in that language, his proficiency in the one would be a real proficiency in the other.

To conclude, if the restoring of this privilege to the Natives of India would be productive of the advantages already mentioned, of which we think the wise and candid will be convinced in proportion as they reflect on the subject, we feel assured that there are very few of our countrymen thoroughly conversant with any one of the common languages of the country, who would in this case regret the labour of acquiring a kindred dialect, when their official duties would so materially assist them therein. Nor

would it be necessary that any sudden alteration should be made. The language of judicial proceedings might at first be rendered optional to the British judge, and we are mistaken if even this would not so powerfully operate on the good sense of our countrymen, as to secure the ultimate abolition of the present system. When such an extensive benefit, then, can be conferred on our Indian fellow-subjects in such an inexpensive way, a benefit which comes home to every bohem, we trust that this subject will no longer be suffered to sleep, but that mind far more powerful will come forth and examine it in the fullest manner.

XII.

ON THE NATIVE OFFICERS OF JUSTICE.*

WHEN Solon was asked whether he had given the best possible laws to the Athenians, he replied, that he had given them the best of which their circumstances would admit. Were any individual to enquire whether the Hindoos are at present governed in the best possible manner, it might be said with equal propriety, that they are governed as well as their circumstances will permit. As the execution of laws is necessarily shared among the body of the people, while the enactment of them is generally confided to the ablest and wisest members of a community, their influence on the happiness of society must depend chiefly on the degree of integrity among the former class. An ancient sage said, that the best administered laws were the best,—not that the character of laws was a matter of no moment, but that the infirmities of human nature rendered an equitable administration of laws more rare, and therefore more an object of desire for of what value are the best laws, if they remain inefficient? And inefficient they must be, if every recipient of power down to the village watchman, be not in some measure governed by equity. It is not enough for the happiness of a country that the principles of equity preponderate in the breasts of its legislators, or even regulate the conduct of those to whom the general superin-

* Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No IV p 457

tendence of justice is committed,—they must form the guide and rule of the lowest officers of justice. It is not enough that they are brought into exercise in those important cases which come before the highest courts of law—they must predominate in the examination of village disputes—for the prevalence of injustice in the minds of those who superintend the daily and local administration of justice, will be sufficient to destroy the influence of the noblest laws, and to paralyze the efforts of the most vigilant judges. Where this is the case, as in India, we may frame the best laws, and to our disappointment find the subject but little relieved by them.

Indian society, combining under that term the governors and the governed, presents a most singular contrast in the wide difference which exists between these two orders of the state, not merely in science and civilization, but in the prevalence of those virtues which render society happy. On the one side we perceive a strict regard for equity, combined with a spirit of liberality and magnanimity, on the other, unbounded chicmery, a total disregard of truth and equity, united sometimes with servility, sometimes with insolence, and a degree of corruption unparalleled perhaps in any other nation. The high sense of equity which prevails among the rulers of India is manifested by the code of just laws which they have framed. Some have attributed the misery of India to a redundancy of legislation. This, however, is disproved by the circumstance, that England with a code ten times more cumbrous, is far happier than India. But have not these numerous laws, originated in a redundancy, rather than a deficiency, of good will to the natives—in an anxiety to preserve our Indian legislation from all ambiguity, and to secure the greatest possible good to the community? Had one half of these regulations been carried into full

effect by the inferior officers of the law, the country would have been rendered comfortable, but unhappily the laws are a full century before the principles which govern the people for whom they are intended, and by a portion of whom they must in a great measure be executed. In India, as far as relates to the native officers of justice, we are much in the same state in which Mr Fox described the people of England under Charles, the Second, having the best laws and the worst administration of justice. Though European judges preside in the native Courts, the minute execution of the laws necessarily devolves on native agents, and though their authority is limited, their opportunities for distressing their countrymen are unbounded. They have ten times greater scope for oppressing than the European has for relieving the native population. The native officers are to their foreign masters as five hundred to one, which of itself throws the preponderance of power into their hands. But when we consider that the European can never be completely at home with the natives, that he cannot enter so minutely into their habits and feelings as their own officers, and that the native officer is perfectly acquainted with the elements of Hindoo character, and possesses pre-eminent advantages for working on the hopes and fears of his countrymen, the preponderance of power necessarily residing with them will greatly exceed even the numerical difference. If these officers were of the same mind with their superiors, nothing could exceed the felicity of the country, but this, alas! is not the case. The deepest profligacy and corruption pervade every class of native officers, from the highest functionary of government to the meanest watchman, there is scarcely an individual who does not embrace every opportunity for illegal gain and extortion. To this general depravity there is perhaps

no exception Lord Teignmouth observed many years ago, that among a thousand native officers he had only met with one in whom he could repose confidence No native ever undertakes a public office with the intention of confining himself to his stated salary, his leading motive is the hope of amassing wealth by the abuse of his power Should any be startled at this sweeping declaration, we would beg leave to say, that after a residence of more than twenty years in the country, after repeated conversations with natives of every degree, and with European gentlemen in every variety of situation, we have never been able to hear of a native officer whom power had not contaminated We do not mean to aver that there is no species of honesty in the country The man whose conscience is dormant when touching a large bribe, would scorn to pilfer his superior merely of a rupee A regard for his own dignity would restrain him from so ignominious a theft, but respecting official corruption and extortion he has no scruple It involves no loss of reputation, and no disgrace in the opinion of his countrymen, these exactions, on the contrary, are considered as the legal perquisites of office, and constitute the grand allurements of the public service In England, public indignation would pursue the man who had fattened in the soil of corruption In India, no such sentiments are ever awakened in the native mind, a fortune created by bribery is rather a subject for applause and admiration It invigorates the hope of the aspirant for office, and redoubles his attempts to enter on this lucrative trade With the native the constant enquiry is, not the amount of the monthly salary attached to any office, but its illegal perquisites For the truth of these statements we appeal with confidence to every European who has enjoyed opportunities for examining the native character, and more

especially to those employed under government This is no partial delinquency, confined to particular spots, the system of illegal exaction is at this moment in fatal operation in every corner of Bengal. The European officers of the Court are the only individuals who set justice before them, beyond the limit of their immediate influence, all is injustice, fraud, and profligacy

Every village of note in India has one or more Chowkedars or watchmen.* They are but remotely connected with the judge of the district, and seldom come under his immediate cognizance, this opens to them a wide field for fraud and injustice, and augments in no small degree the value of their appointment The natives have a strong dread of appearing before a court, or before any officer of justice a disposition which the chowkedar or watchman never fails to improve, to the injury of the natives under his jurisdiction Village broils cannot be avoided, the watchman is bound to report every circumstance to his superior, and a dread of the consequences to which an unfavourable report may lead, will invariably induce those likely to be implicated, to quash enquiry by a suitable bribe The magnitude of the gift is of course proportioned to the importance of the transaction should the question be likely to require much investigation, or a reference to the principal court in the district, an unlimited opportunity is created for oppressive exactions, as it is within the province of the watchman to name the individuals who are to appear as witnesses, an office which, from the inconvenience it occasions, is always an object of aversion The natives, therefore, who thus stand in jeopardy, seldom fail to conciliate the watchman with a

* These also do the work of petty constables in England, and form the lower rank among the Native Officers of Justice

small douceur The Hindoos have likewise an inherent awe of power in all its gradations A European will rear his front when unjustly accused, and, standing on the ground of his own innocence, demand a fair and equitable examination A Hindoo crouches before the minions of power, and, however just his cause, cannot refrain from employing the artifices of corruption, even where they are not required Thus encouraged by the pusillanimity of their countrymen, these petty oppressors pervade the country, spreading terror and dismay in every direction If a native be justly seized by them, he has before him the prospect of punishment, if unjustly, of annoyance; in both cases, he cannot escape without a loss of time and money, and it is therefore his interest to soften the messenger of the law by a present, which, in India, if duly applied, never fails to produce the desired effect An instance of oppression occurred about twelve months since under our own observation in a neighbouring zillah. A watchman had been sent from the station to summon a native of some respectability as a witness: the native slipping half a rupee into his hand, begged him to report that he, the witness, could not be found The watchman accepted the bribe with great complacency. About this time a corn-factor happened to meet a boat proceeding to the Presidency with rice, the proprietor of which, ignorant of the augmented price of that article, bargained with him for his corn at a rate much below the average of the market The next day the proprietor discovering his mistake refused to ratify the purchase. The corn-factor meeting the aforesaid watchman, offered him a similar bribe if he would go to the boat, report that he had arrived from the seat of justice to enforce the negotiation, and, in case of hesitation, to proceed with the boat to the judge The owner of the boat, alarmed at the

intelligence, instantly agreed to deliver the corn at the stipulated price, and rewarded the forbearance of the watchman. The dispute was thus amicably adjusted, and the native officer returned home richer by a rupee and a half than he had left it. Cases of similar fraud occur daily, were we to mention only a tenth of the instances which have come under our knowledge during one year, or specify the various ways in which the power of this lowest officer is abused, we should occupy the whole of this number. This abuse of power will not appear strange to one who considers that every chowkedar enters on the functions of his office with the express design of making the most of his situation, that he is invested with sufficient power to overawe his weak countrymen, and is so far removed from the eye of his European judge as to render the prospect of discovery and dismissal exceedingly remote.

The chowkedar, however, though he sometimes extorts for himself, is only an inferior agent in this work of speculation. He looks up for protection to his superior the Daroga,* with whom he shares the amount of his exactions. The Daroga is too wise to quarrel with his tools, and the only use he would make of the complaint against a watchman would be, to ascertain the sum extorted, that he might call the man to account for excluding him from a share in the plunder. He is as corrupt and unjust as any of the underlings of his department. He undertakes his office with the same intention of realizing a far greater amount than his stated salary, and to this object he bends his attention, sacrificing with equal indifference the welfare of his countrymen and the claims of justice.

* The Daroga has jurisdiction over a circle of villages, and answers in some measure to a Justice of the Peace in England.

There is no depth of profligacy to which he is not equal. His whole career from the moment of his entering on office is one unvaried scene of iniquity. The larger share of power with which he is invested, he abuses in proportion as he can evade the scrutiny of the European judge. *No crime is ever detected within the circle of his authority which does not contribute to his own pecuniary advantage.* We make this assertion with the fullest confidence that it will admit of no contradiction. Let us suppose that a case of robbery reaches him. his first enquiry is, not in what manner the crime may be detected and punished, but how this fortunate event may be improved to the highest personal advantage. Animated with the hope of plunder, he proceeds to the village accompanied with a dozen of his official servants. From the moment the crime became public, the inhabitants, feeling assured that this golden opportunity would not be lost, had prepared themselves to avert the pending storm by a series of falsehoods. But experience has taught them that even falsehood will be unavailing unless strengthened by a substantial bribe. The Daroga with all the pomp of power at length reaches the village, and quarters himself and his train on the richest inhabitant. The arrival of the European judge would not occasion half the bustle and consternation which his arrival occasions. He immediately assumes an air of the sternest inflexibility, and opens his court of enquiry assisted by his satellites, whose chief business is to fish out the names of the most wealthy inhabitants. These are summoned as implicated in the alleged crime or as witnesses, and are threatened with confinement, vexation, and transportation to the station, and all under the colour of justice. During this pretended investigation, it is perfectly understood between the parties that the only obstacle to a happy adjustment of the

matter, is the settlement of that sum which shall harmonize with the rapacity of the Daroga and the concession of the men under examination. The sum is at length fixed, and the individuals are successively discharged without farther question. The Daroga having thus gone through the village and collected every rupee which can be extorted, closes the enquiry. The report made to the judge in many cases is such as to bury all future investigation, and in other cases the most needy, or those who resisted his exactions, are summoned as evidence. Finding the field completely reaped, he departs, to the great joy of the inhabitants, in whose mind this representative of justice has left the most determined resolution to conceal crime and palliate every iniquity, rather than draw on themselves the recurrence of a similar investigation. Is this picture exaggerated? We say, ask the natives themselves, who groan beneath the intolerable burden of these inquisitorial visits. They are the best judges, and can give the most impartial evidence. Ask every man of respectability throughout the country, whether there be anything he or his countrymen dread more than a visit from the Daroga, whether that hated name does not at once body forth the image of fraud, tyranny, and oppression. Ask him whether there be any circumstance, except family disgrace, or the loss of kindred, which he dreads more than to hear of the commission of a robbery or a murder in the vicinity of his residence, and we feel assured that the free expression of his sentiments will fully bear us out in these statements. An instance occurred, a year or two ago, of the discovery of a dead body in a village. Towards evening the rumour ran from house to house, and the inhabitants, assembling together, carried it to the next village. The unhappy villagers, on whom the body was thrown, roused by a similar dread, carried

it to the next village, where, on the discovery of the transaction, a similar transportation was made, and on the approach of morning it was thrown into a neighbouring marsh. These extraordinary precautions were adopted to avoid the domiciliary visit of the Daroga, with all its concomitant vexations. Should any enquire whether these daring oppressions remain unpunished, we answer that they are visited with the severest retribution when they are detected. But in how many instances are they not committed with impunity? Who is to drag the delinquent to the bar? Not those who at so high a price have purchased exoneration from trouble. If any spark of manly feeling existed in their minds, the evil would not require even a reference to the judge, the extortion of the officer would be resisted at the beginning,—since it is contrary to law and equity. Is it to be believed that any man would thus patiently submit to illegal oppression and then claim the interference of the civil power? It is on the weakness of the native character, that the Native Officer works, and on which he depends for final impunity. The natives, of Bengal at least, are by turns pusillanimous or insolent, pusillanimous when any decided measure is required, and insolent when invested with power. In every investigation of this nature these contending ingredients of character are fully developed, and the insolent tone of the Daroga may be traced, both in its origin and in its gradual increase, to the servile submission of his countrymen. No lofty sentiments of freedom burn in the mind of a Hindoo, whether from some imbecility in his constitutional formation, or from a subjection of many centuries to foreign conquerors, every spark of manliness seems extinct. The indignation which oppression excites is soon quenched, it seldom creates a determination to pursue the tyrant to justice at whatever

hazard of personal inconvenience The Hindoo never opens his mind to the conviction that one bold assertion of his rights, one public exposition of the injuries he suffers, would arrest the progress of extortion, and liberate him and his neighbours from that endless series of oppression which lies before him for the future Such reasoning would be lost on him, his first emotion is that of averting *present* danger. Instead therefore of carrying his complaint to the seat of justice, where redress may be obtained for present wrongs and security against future evils, he prefers the expeditious palliative of a bribe, and submits without hesitation to injuries which in England would rouse the spirit of the lowest peasant. While this disposition reigns among the people, it will not be matter of surprise that for one case redressed, ten remain unpunished

It is not however on great occasions only that the rapacity of the Native officer of justice is developed He scorns not the simplest trifle, no occasion for exaction escapes his vigilance, and the lightest trespasses serve to augment his purse equally with the deepest crimes. But it is chiefly in little occurrences, and in trifling disputes, that his interference is vexatious, as they are of more frequent recurrence Nor is this fraudulent disposition confined to the officers of the judicial service, it pervades every department of public business, and meets the natives in every direction Were this not the case, how does it happen that every man, however poor when entering on a public situation, invariably quits it in such a state of opulence as his salary alone could not have created? How does it happen that men whose salaries never exceed thirty rupees monthly, are able to ride about in palanqueens, rear sumptuous edifices in their native villages, and occasionally entertain with

splendid liberality a numerous train of guests? These public situations, however small the salary attached to them, are at present the chief avenues to wealth, and on the distant prospect of these rich prizes will many a native live from year to year, practising every species of servility. For one native who obtains wealth through trade and commerce, there are at least two who acquire it through the emoluments of office. Were we to scrutinize the great families who now support the splendour of the national faith, we should find that two-thirds of them have risen to distinction through the channel of official situations. The ancient nobility of the country is extinct. Their habits of profusion were incompatible with the vigorous and steady collection of the public revenues established under our own government, and their estates have consequently fallen beneath the hammer. By whom have these estates been purchased, but by those who have enjoyed public offices—by men whose stated monthly salaries never exceeded two hundred rupees, and who expended the whole of that sum, and perhaps twice its amount, in splendid shows or in profuse hospitality? These men have not all been chowkedars or darogas, but they have been engaged in the public service, and have accumulated their wealth with such silence and secrecy as to elude the observation even of their immediate masters.

But to return to the Daroga. In addition to the weakness of the native character, there are other obstacles in the way of his detection. The officers of the court are equally corrupt with the oppressive Daroga, and with them he is linked in the strongest bonds, and is supported with the full weight of their influence. To these men the detection and punishment of crime form no object of solicitude. Their aid is purchased by the Daroga with a share of the plunder; and as he may frequently stand in

need of their assistance, the connection is of mutual benefit to both parties, though highly detrimental to the interests of justice. Should a complaint be carried to court, there are numerous ways of intimidating the plaintiff, of impeding the progress of his suit, of interposing delays and dilapidating his property, the dread of which is a bar to the institution of complaints, and operates powerfully on the native plaintiff, who has before him the certainty of expense and the uncertainty of redress. Not six months ago, a native who had gained some ascendancy in one of the courts, requested a gentleman who has several causes in court, to dispense with future suits, and allow him a monthly salary, for which he engaged to see his wishes invariably complied with. Such is the address, the boldness, and the smooth-faced chicanery of these native Amlas, through whom the cause is to be managed, that the most penetrating judge must in many cases despair of discovering the truth through the thick web of falsehood with which it is artfully covered. A European judge, standing alone as the representative of justice and equity, and thus surrounded with men to whom falsehood is perfectly natural, whose disposition and interest irresistibly impel them into the paths of unrighteousness, must possess more penetration and vigilance than falls to the lot of humanity to render justice to every complainant.

To these obstacles to justice must be added, that which arises from the facility with which perjured witnesses may be obtained. From this pest of Indian society no province is exempt. False witnesses may be obtained in every place, on the slightest notice and for a mere trifle. Their price varies in different zillahs: in some sixteen may be had for a rupee, in others ten, but four annas each is what no true son of the trade was ever known to

refuse in the interior, and at this rate any number may be collected to testify to facts they never witnessed. A Daroga, therefore, who meets with impediments in his nefarious extortions, has only to summon a few of these profligate wretches to his aid, and his end is accomplished. The native whom he oppresses knows that they would follow the cause to court, and occasion him difficulties, at the thought of which his mind sinks within him. He is therefore completely at the mercy of the officer. Perhaps there is no single circumstance which occasions more difficulty in the decision of causes, than the great prevalence of perjury. Between true and false evidence in India it is almost impossible to distinguish, and the mere suspicion that the majority of the witnesses is perjured, tends to cover the whole evidence with doubt, and operates to the manifest disadvantage of even true witnesses. Where perjured evidence is employed by one party, there is a very strong temptation in the other party to employ the same means, while the conscience is lulled by a persuasion that they are indispensable. An individual who has frequent occasion of appealing to the native courts, informed us on a recent occasion, that it was impossible to carry a cause without resorting to the means employed by the opposite party, and that his success was owing to the superior body of witnesses which he held always in readiness to swear to any thing, after having received about two hours' training from his legal agent.

Such is the system of bold oppression which pervades every corner of Bengal. The scenes we have been describing are not of rare occurrence, scarcely a day passes without witnessing some scene of speculation or fraud in some part of Bengal. These profligate principles have been in operation ever since we held the country, though with diminished vigour, and indeed long before, for the

Mussulman government never imposed so steady and systematic a check on public delinquency as we have. Yet in spite of legislation and punishment, these evils continue to disturb the repose of the community, and they will continue to darken the prospects of India, whenever they are not checked by the principles of virtue and equity which reign in the breasts of European magistrates, or till some great moral change shall infuse into the character of this people the boldness of truth and the firmness of equity. The disease is radical, and demands a radical cure. Detection, instead of removing the disposition, only serves to invest it with greater circumspection. The punishment of one delinquent strikes but a temporary dismay into the breast of neighbouring delinquents, the terror quickly subsides, leaving the appetite for plunder only sharpened by abstinence. The man who succeeds an officer dismissed for this crime, proceeds deliberately in the same career, as soon as he is firmly seated in his place, and can calculate on the fidelity of his inferior associates. Nay, the very men who groan beneath the burden of these exactions, if lifted to the same official situation, would without remorse practise the same oppression the next day. Every man being equally corrupt, there is no prospect of amelioration from a change of officers.

This system, which under the sacred name of justice, plants disquietude and misery in every village throughout the country, cannot fail to deteriorate the morals of the country. By establishing a dependence on falsehood rather than on truth, on chicanery rather than on justice or innocence, it annihilates a spirit of virtuous independence. The man who receives a bribe, sells—not justice, but a miserable partiality, and the man who offers it, invariably expects permission to transgress the limits of

equity The man who employs perjured evidence to gain his object, is as corrupt as the witness he engages, and he who depends on venality for success, can never confine himself to the truth The bonds of social morality are thus relaxed, confidence is annihilated, while falsehood and duplicity, meeting with no impediment from public execration, pervade every hamlet, and taint even the sanctuary of justice Let those who represent the Hindoo character as innocent and moral, bring forward their proofs of this disposition, let them accompany us through every inferior native court, and every little contemptible village, and shew us the spot in this extensive land which does not exhibit, during a single week, scenes of profligate corruption and daring oppression, from which any man, educated in a Christian land, would shrink with horror Let them station themselves only for a single day on the public road, and after witnessing the numerous exactions levied on the innocent traveller by men armed with a little brief authority, describe any single spot where the principles of justice and equity predominate There is, perhaps, no country on earth where morals are so completely relaxed, where those vices which degrade human nature and destroy the peace of society, are in such fatal operation as in India That a man should employ every art of corruption to evade deserved punishment is not matter for surprise, but in what country, where the sanctions of morality are held sacred, does a plaintiff think of employing corruption in a *just* cause? Yet such is daily the case in India No man ever dreams of standing on the high ground of his own innocence, and we will venture to affirm that scarcely a cause is ever decided in which the officers of justice do not receive bribes from *both* parties As far as the natives are concerned in the administration of law, the whole is

one scene of unvaried profligacy, into which no virtuous principles, and no compunctions of conscience, are ever permitted to enter

This disposition on the part of the natives, paralyses every attempt to establish a vigilant police, for how can an effective police be established when it is contrary to the wishes and against the interest of the people to lend it their aid? Under the present system of exaction, to assist in the detection of crimes involves too great a sacrifice of money, comfort, and time. The whole country is thus leagued, not so much against the punishment, as the discovery of offences. Every precaution is used to quash enquiry, and defeat the objects of a vigilant government. The aim of every native officer, however concealed, is known to be his own pecuniary advantage rather than to promote the interests of society, and thus a compromise is established between those who ought to search out the haunts of villainy and those whose information is necessary to the discovery, the consequence of which is an awful impunity for guilt. The dread of the domiciliary visit of the Daroga and his officers is so great as in many cases to overcome all concern for a personal injury. Hundreds of cases occur annually in which the master of a family after having been robbed to a considerable extent, has imposed a vow of silence on every member of his household, lest a whisper of the event should reach the officer of his division. If this be the case with regard to personal injury, and numerous instances could be adduced to substantiate our position, it is not to be supposed that the natives will voluntarily come forward to aid in the detection of crimes, which do not affect their own peace. We have, alas! in India no unpaid magistracy, whose efforts have proved so valuable in our own country. The native gentry of the country

are alive to nothing but that which concerns their private interest, the officers of the court are worse than indifferent to the detection of crime, and the European superintendents of the police are thus left to pursue their course unaided and alone.

This indisposition to promote the detection of heinous crimes is greatly augmented by the insensibility of the natives to the atrocity of vice. In Christian countries, and more especially in our native land, every man is in his own sphere a guardian of the peace of society. On the report of a murder the whole neighbourhood is aroused, and every man is animated with a desire to lend all the aid in his power to bring the assassin to punishment. The feelings which create this disposition are not to be found in India. A native will shudder at the idea of bloodshed, he will dread the approach of an assassin, and if he be a devotee of Vishnoo, will exhibit every native indication of horror, when even a buffalo is sacrificed; but he will lend no assistance to discover the men who may have murdered his next-door neighbour, and though in possession of the most important intelligence respecting the transaction, will rather see the legal agent return unsuccessful, than proffer his information. Well was it observed by one of the brightest ornaments of the English senate, that humanity did not consist in a squeamish ear, that it did not consist in shrinking and starting at tales of blood, but in the disposition of the heart to remedy the evils unfolded.

But we must hasten to a close, and shall only trespass on the reader's patience with one or two more observations. While these feelings so fully pervade the body of the people, and the native officers are so corrupt, it is difficult to imagine a more ponderous task than that which devolves on the European functionaries of Government

Educated in the most virtuous principles, and anxious to bring them into operation for the benefit of those committed to their charge, it is a bitter reflection that their efforts are in so many instances defeated by the profligacy of the native character. If wise laws, a vigilant superintendence of justice, and a paternal anxiety for the welfare of the country, could have relieved it from misery, India would long since have been among the happiest of nations. But sound laws alone are incompetent to bestow universal happiness, because they cannot implant sound morality in every bosom. It is not to its venerable code of jurisprudence, or to its political institutions, to its parliaments, or even to its juries, that the happiness of England is owing, so much as to that fine tone of moral feeling which the benign influence of religion has created. A country may possess as good a constitution as England, and be miserable still. If the best constitution ever devised by man were bestowed on India in its present condition, we question whether its happiness would be augmented in the smallest degree. Of what value would a parliament or a jury be in a country where both these institutions would be employed for purposes of the most shameful corruption?

In other conquests, oppression proceeds from the conquerors, while the wretched natives combine together to assuage their grief by mutual condolence, and to obtain some relief against oppression by mutual support. In India this is not the case. It is the conquerors who have to defend their subjects from the injustice of their fellow-countrymen, and from the operation of their own vicious principles. From the public servants of their own nation they have nothing to expect but inexorable extortion, it is from British vigilance and firmness alone, that the smallest ray of comfort can shine on them. But it may

naturally be asked, Can no dependence be placed on the native officers? cannot the European judge, without danger, elevate *any* to some participation of confidence? Experience says, No—all are equally corrupt. Power has performed on them its most baneful transformation; the authority, however small, with which they are vested is too strong for their virtue, and to augment that power by a confidence in their probity, would only carry them still farther from the centre of truth and righteousness. Were a European officer to repose confidence in any native servant, that confidence would be most shamefully abused, and its advantages immediately sold to the highest bidder. Nothing can exceed the keenness with which the slightest mark of partiality or kindness to any particular individual is discovered, or the scenes of bribery which follow the discovery. Any man thus distinguished above his fellows, or who can boast of such a distinction,

offered a European judge five hundred rupees a month for the privilege of whispering to him occasionally in court. The proposal was rejected with scorn, but had it been admitted, the native who enjoyed so rich a prize would in two or three years have accumulated a fortune, greater than the whole of his master's salary could have created in ten years. It is no eastern metaphor, but a melancholy fact, that one ray of favour from the judge, if duly improved, is worth more than an immense salary to any native officer

The judge has therefore to maintain the sovereignty of justice not only alone, but in opposition to the wishes and efforts of his whole court. However difficult the task to an ingenuous and upright mind, he must guard every look, and word, and action, lest by appearing to bestow the smallest degree of confidence on any man, he should take into his bark those who would turn the vessel altogether out of the course of justice. In the land from which it is his glory to have sprung, he has been accustomed to that beautiful maxim, that every man is to be deemed innocent till he be proved guilty. He must reverse this maxim, and deem every man venal, till he has proved himself impervious to corruption, for native dissimulation is of so profound a character as to elude the severest vigilance. Few nations surpass the Hindoos in the knowledge of character. It is their perpetual study, the source of their influence, the origin of their ill-gotten wealth. Their course of action is adjusted in the finest proportion to the temperament of those with whom they have to deal, and their knowledge of the exact moment when either by concession, submission, or audacity, their object may be accomplished, appears almost incredible. The deep divan which sits on the arrival of every new judge or collector, to put together the several observa-

tious of its members, and to ascertain his disposition, and decide on the best mode of influencing him, is described with great accuracy by the late Mr Tytler. With these obstacles on every side, is not the task of the European functionary most arduous, and is not the discovery of truth in any case next to a miracle?

If then, during the period of our administration, we have been unable to confer domestic peace, happiness, and security on our native subjects to the full extent of our wishes, let no man lay the failure at the door of Government. The disappointment has not arisen from arbitrary laws, or oppression on the part of the conquerors, or even from a culpable indifference to the welfare of the native population, but from the prevalence of those evil principles which oppose alike the efforts of missionary zeal and the views of the wisest legislators. We have protected the country from external violence, but who shall protect it from the effect of its indigenous corruption? It is not the Government which has been wanting, but the people who have been wanting to their own best interests. Had they seconded the wishes of Government, we should now have beheld a totally different aspect of things. The vigilance of Government has been of incalculable benefit, for the smallest deficiency in the seat of authority would have aggravated these evils in a tenfold degree. The steady operation of our laws has produced some amelioration, and steady perseverance cannot fail of producing a still greater improvement in the condition of the natives. There is far less violence, fraud, and speculation, now, than when we were new to the government, the field for rapacity has been narrowed, and will, we trust, diminish, till the same probity and integrity shall pervade the lowest, which now pervade the higher departments of Government.

It is neither our province nor our desire to interfere with the public administration of this land, and we trust the severest criticism will not discover in the preceding observations any wish but that of exhibiting a correct view of the native character under a new aspect. We trust, therefore, we shall not exceed the limits of our province by remarking, that as every improvement in the happiness of the people of these realms has hitherto arisen from the exercise of European integrity, the more this integrity is brought to bear on the country, the brighter will be its prospects. Every increase of European functionaries is a real blessing, and every extension of the power and influence of native officers a decided curse. Should circumstances at any future period permit, through the increase of European judges, the establishment of a closer check on native depravity, the country would reap the highest advantages from such an arrangement. If to this we add the gradual extension of Christianity, and the admission of its divine influence on the hearts and conduct of the natives, we think that in time great progress will be made towards a change similar to that which has rendered our own country, once rude and barbarous, the envy of the civilized world.

We know that there are many in this country, who, suffering from the depravity of the natives, entertain feelings of great hostility towards them, and discourage all attempts at their improvement. They consider them as irrecoverably depraved, incapable and unworthy of any amelioration, and doomed by Divine Providence to lasting inferiority and misery. But they are mistaken. Providence has consigned no nation to irrevocable misery. The improvement which is in store for the family of man has begun already to develop itself. Even the wild and uncivilized inhabitants of Otahete, infinitely below the

natives of India in intellectual vigour and the arts of civilized life, have begun already to partake of the cheering ray of civilization and Christianity. In the glorious career of improvement, India will not, we are convinced, be found behindhand. Great allowance is to be made for the enervating influence of an eastern climate, much for a long series of despotic rulers, and still more for the influence of a degrading superstition, which has been for two thousand years propelling its roots and extending its shade, like the mighty Banian tree, till it has covered the whole surface of the land and tainted all the springs of happiness. Happy, if as these evils gradually disappear, India has not to encounter fresh obstacles to improvement in the insensibility, or opposition of those who, though blest with superior knowledge, shew by their abuse of it, that it has originated in the adventitious circumstances of their birth, rather than any mental pre-eminence. We cannot close this essay more appropriately than by referring them to the opinion of an illustrious statesman now no more, and entreating them to apply to India, his remarks on the civilization of Africa. "We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans. But in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and for a time almost imperceptible, we have become rich in a variety of acquirements. We are favoured above measure in the gifts of Providence, we are unrivalled in commerce, pre-eminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the elements of civil society. We are in the possession of peace, of liberty, and of happiness: we are under the influence of a mild and a beneficent religion: and we are

by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice we are living under a system of government, which our own happy experience has led us to pronounce the best and wisest, and which has become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings we must for ever have been excluded, had there been any truth in those principles, which some have not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa, and we should have been at this moment little superior, either in morals, knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of that continent"—*Pitt's Speech on the Slave Trade*

XIII
REVIEW
OF

KURMA LOCHUNA:

A COMPILATION RELATIVE TO DOMESTIC DUTIES,
TRANSLATED FROM SUNGSKRITA INTO
BENGALFL BY KALEE DASA.*

Serampore, 1821, 24mo pp 28

PERHAPS we cannot better occupy the space between the graver essays which precede and follow this article than by an examination of this little work. It is a compilation from the shastras, of a number of rules relative to domestic duties, translated into the popular dialect by Kalee-dasa, one of the Serampore pundits. The original *Sungskrita* is given first, and then a metrical translation in Bengalee. The rules refer to various offices of life, for which the Hindoo sages have thought fit to prescribe, such as cleansing the teeth, eating, sleeping, sneezing, anointing the body. Some of them are puerile and ridiculous, others very indelicate, which we have omitted, and a few are of a moral character—these we have reserved for the last. The arrangement, which is very defective, we have endeavoured to rectify by classing them according to the nature of their subjects.

With whatever pleasantry a European may be disposed to regard these maxims, to a Hindoo they appear invaluable. If he believes one half the punishments denounced

* Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No IV p 481

in this little duodecimo of twenty-eight pages, he ought to commit it to memory, and enjoin the same duty on his children. The necessity which existed for such a work enhances its value, for, in this last age of the world, every thing had been going wrong. men did not sleep in the right position, they cleansed not their teeth with the branches of those trees which the gods selected for them some hundred thousand years ago, they called in the barber on an improper day, nay, to such an extent had the degeneracy of this age reached, that some ventured to put on new apparel as soon as it was purchased, without waiting for two or three revolutions of the earth. These and similar enormities, which were daily increasing, imperiously called for the publication of some work, which should remind the Hindoos of that glorious period when such irregularities were unknown, and when the gods came down to earth and talked *Sungskrita* familiarly with the great sages of the East. The Translator has indeed experienced a mortifying proof of the further degeneracy of his countrymen, in his attempt to obtain subscriptions, many having actually refused to purchase the work, lest they should incur the penalties it denounces with their eyes open. To these men ignorance is assuredly bliss, for as he who unintentionally performs a good action, loses half its merit, by parity of reason he who unwittingly does a bad action, incurs only half its penalty.

It will be a natural enquiry, on what principle these regulations are founded. Law derives its value from being founded in reason, and perhaps there are few studies more attractive than that of tracing up the precepts of law to the great fountain of reason and equity. But these laws of domestic economy are arbitrary, and must be received without examination, since it is a sin for a

Hindoo at least, to carry his enquiries into the reasonableness or the occasion of the prescriptions of his shastras. The shastras are like the commands of a king, of which it is treasonable to enquire the reason. The Hindoo pundit therefore believes implicitly, and the Hindoo subject obeys without enquiring. For these acts of passive obedience they are consoled with the assurance, that both their shastras and their kings are infallible. So says the *Hitopudeshā*, or book of Moral Instruction, in that celebrated dialogue between the two jackals, wherein the principles of passive obedience are laid down with great precision. We have ventured to violate this prohibition for the benefit of our readers, and have prevailed on our pundit to give us, as far as they admit of it, an explanation of the occasions from which these regulations sprang: which he has done in many cases by reasoning from analogy.

The first two pages are occupied with directions for Cleaning the Teeth. The Hindoos, without tooth brushes and tooth powder, exhibit as fine teeth as any nation on earth,—and at the smallest expense, for a Hindoo plucks a little twig from a tree, strips it of its leaves, and rubs his teeth with the bruised end of it till they are bright. This must however be done before the rising of the sun, “He who cleans his teeth after the sun has risen, why does he worship *Vishnōo*?” “Cleanse the teeth with the thumb and the second and third finger, never with the first.” Of this ordinance it is difficult to assign the reason. Our pundit conjectures that it may have originated in the following circumstance. Before the creation, when the element of water prevailed, one of the gods having occasion to burn the body of a deceased friend, was constrained for want of a few feet of solid ground to consume it on his left hand, stirring up the fire with the fore-finger

of his right hand. Hence, he supposes, this finger has been doomed to inferiority. "Use not the *Ushwutt'ha**, the *Vuta*†, the *Vilwa*‡, or the *Amulukee*§, for the use of these involves eternal punishment." In the *Ushwutt'ha* the three principal gods reside. *Brahma* at the top, *Shiva* in the trunk and branches, and *Vishnoo* in the root. The *vilwa* is *Shiva's* favourite, for one of his friends in the *Treta Yoga*, threw a *vilwa* fruit at his temples, which so delighted him that he immediately consecrated it. At the periodical destruction of the world *Vishnoo* floats on the ocean on a *vuta* leaf. "When no twig can be obtained, or on forbidden days, cleanse the teeth with water poured twelve times from the palm of the hand into the mouth." "If a person cleanse his teeth on the day of a *shraddha*, or of fasting, those two actions lose their reward." Early rising is enjoined on the *Hindoos*, as much as sleeping in the day is forbidden. "He who cleans his teeth at the middle or close of the day, the gods receive not his flowers, nor his ancestors the water he offers them." "He who cleans his teeth at the time of bathing, (which must be done after the sun has risen,) the gods receive not his sacrifice."

On the subject of Bathing and Washing, we have the following regulations. "Let not the face be washed looking towards the south or west, for fear of eternal punishment." "He who anoints before bathing, or on particular occasions, such as the day of the funeral obsequies, or the 12th of the moon, is as though he anointed his body with wine." In the use of oil there is no merit, as it is an unconsecrated liquid, it ought not to precede bathing,

* *Ficus religiosa*

† *Ficus indica*

‡ *Aegle Marmelos*

§ *Phyllanthus Emblica*

which is an act of holiness. But this ordinance is in little repute at present. The Hindoos find it more convenient first to anoint their bodies with oil and then to cleanse themselves from its inconveniences by bathing. The spirit of the shastras with regard to bathing is daily defeated. It is simply an act of holiness, the Hindoo is to dip his body in the sacred stream and retire. He is not so much as permitted to talk while in the water, yet few Hindoos, except those aspiring after the honour of sanctity, refrain from conversing with their neighbours, or from occasionally casting a glance at the females, while standing amidst the Ganges. In the cold climate of Russia, promiscuous bathing may be innocent, but in the warm climate of the east, to have permitted it, and at the same time to have enjoined and expected purity of mind, manifests a wretched deficiency in the knowledge of human nature. "Bathing in the morning and *Huvishya**, in the months *Magha*, *Voishakha*, and *Kartika*, destroy the greatest sins."

"He who at the time of bathing rubs his body with his hands or with any thing beside his napkin, is as though he touched a dog. Let him bathe again." Every portion of the body of a Hindoo is the residence of some god; perhaps this may have occasioned the injunction which forbids the interruption of their repose during the performance of an act esteemed holy. "At the time of bathing, at the *vrata*†, at the worship of the gods, or the performance of a *shraddha*, let the hair be bound up in a knot, and let the individual be clothed with two garments." To perform any religious ceremony in a state of uncleanness, is against the canon of Hindoo law. A

* *Ghee*, or clarified butter. † Voluntary religious observances.

state of nudity is a state of uncleanness, and of this there are three kinds—natural nudity, having the hair loose, and having only one garment on the body “He who in sacrifices, when bestowing gifts, at the funeral ceremony, the morning and evening devotions, when meditating or offering water to, deceased ancestors, does not make a mark from the tip of his nose to the top of his forehead, loses all the fruit of those actions” “If any one makes obeisance, or gives a benediction when carrying the sacrificial flowers, or a water-pot, when bathing, or in the water, or when anointing his body with oil, both he who receives and he who returns the salutation, will receive eternal punishment” “He who after bathing neglects to wash his feet, loses one year’s merit” Probably this is prescribed in order, to preserve the feet clean Shoes, as being made of cow hides, are unclean, and defile the feet, and a native never wears them when returning from his morning ablutions, he either walks home barefooted, or uses wooden sandals Neither are shoes ever used at home or within the enclosure of the mansion, and a native invariably washes his feet after putting them off There are still some individuals in the country, renowned for sanctity, who never suffer their feet to be contaminated with the hide of Bhuguvutee “He who bathes at the steps used by a washerman, is as though he killed a brahmun” Washermen are considered as among the meanest citizens of the Hindoo commonwealth, and in the country are never permitted to use the steps appropriated for public bathing In crowded cities, distinction with regard to bathing is necessarily laid aside, but in country villages the pre-eminence of the brahmanic tribe is held inviolable Citizens of a lower degree always bathe at a respectful distance from the brahmun, and

those from whom he cannot receive water, never venture to bathe at the same steps with him. The last injunction on the subject of bathing, outweighs all others in importance. "He who at the conjunction called Narayunee, bathes in silence in the Koorootaya river, raises thirty millions of his ancestors to eternal bliss."

Twenty-six of the rules refer to the culinary art and the article of Eating. "If while a brahmun is cooking, he give fire to a shoodra, the whole of his food is polluted, as though it had been prepared by a shoodra; if he partake of the food thus tainted, he becomes in effect a shoodra." "Eating with the face to the east ensures long life, with it to the south, celebrity, to the west, wealth, to the north, pecuniary embarrassment." Eating towards the south, though it procures celebrity, occasions the speedy death of parents, while they are alive, therefore, the Hindoo refrains from a practice which, though it may augment his fame, hastens their dissolution. "If before partaking of food, you do not with your finger make a circular water-mark on the ground to contain your dish, the Yaksbus and Rakshusas will devour all the food." This injunction, as long as it continues to be honoured, effectually precludes the natives from the enjoyment of a table. "If at the time of eating, the water pot be placed on the left hand, the water becomes blood." The Hindoo idea on the subject of the hands is somewhat singular. The right hand is holy, the left is esteemed unholy; each has its distinct functions, the body from the navel upwards being holy, is the province of the right hand; the rest of the body being unholy, is abandoned to the left. Except in cases of unquestionable necessity, no interchange of services between them is permitted. In the *Muha-natuka*, the left hand of

Rama is represented as saying to its fellow, "You are employed in the honourable office of inviting guests*, through you nourishment is conveyed to your lord, why then, when Rama draws his bow, do you retire behind me?" The right hand replies, "I do not flinch from the combat, but I retire to his ear to enquire whether the shaft will be successful or not." "He who drinks water after the first two or three mouthfuls, avoids disease, if he drink in the midst of the meal, he becomes strong and powerful, but water taken after the meal, contributes to digest the food" "If he who deals out food, touch any individual while eating, that man is not permitted to eat." There are two rules relative to pana†, the Hindoo dessert "He who eats the tip of the leaf, brings on himself disease, sin resides at the root of the leaf, a decayed leaf occasions speedy death, and the veins of the leaf destroy knowledge." "He who eats beetle-nut before pana, becomes a chundala till he has bathed," and according to another authority, is unable to remember Vishnoo at the hour of death, and in the next transmigration is doomed to poverty. "If a woman open a pumpkin with a knife, she becomes childless" She may, however, prepare it for food, after it has been dissected by a man "On her first entry into the house of her lord, if a woman partake of food after having already eaten at the house of her father-in-law, she becomes unfortunate," that is, she has female children, for the native pundits do not conceal the fact that this injunction is calculated to bless her with a male progeny.

The following are the restrictions on Food, respecting which we offer no comment, as the reasons which gave

* A native puts out his right hand, when inviting and welcoming any one

† The leaf of Piper Betel

them birth are buried in the same oblivion to which imperious necessity has happily consigned many of the rules themselves "He who eats butter, prepared with the hand and not with a churn, or the leaves of hemp, or flesh not offered in sacrifice, or partakes of clarified butter from the same dish which contains his food, or places milk in a copper vessel, or takes salt with milk, is as though he eat cow's flesh" "He who on Sunday eats *Masha kulaya**, or meat, or mosoor†, or neem‡, fish, honey, rice gruel, wood-apple§, or ginger, will be childless through seven transmigrations, and wretched through every succeeding birth On the 11th of the moon all food is prohibited, as on that day every sin, from the murder of a brahmun to the smallest peccadillo, enters into the food But if any part of the 10th lunar day happens to trespass on the solar day, fasting is forbidden, since on such an occasion Gandharee fasted, and lost a hundred children. On the day after fasting it is not permitted to play at dice, or to eat twice, to sleep in the day, or to eat vegetables, honey, or food prepared by another. He who on the day of the sun's entering a new sign, on the eighth and fourteenth of the moon, on the new or full moon, anoints himself with oil, or eats flesh, goes to the hell where transgressors are fed with dung and urine; he who eats laoo** in the month Bhadrā, or radishes in the month Magha, or ola†† in the month Kartika, is as though he eat cow's flesh In the months Shravana, Bhadrā, Ashvina, Kartika, you may not eat lulumee‡‡, radishes, or

* *Phaseolus radiatus*. The same name is also given to *Dolichos pilorus*.

† *Erum hirsutum* ‡ *Melia azadirachta* § *Egle Marmelos*

** *Cucurbita lagenaria* †† *Arum campanulatum* ‡‡ *Convolvulus repens*.

*vrihutee** If a brahmūn eat on the invitation of a shoodra, he loses all his merit, and is as though he drank wine To eat at the house of a strumpet, is equal to the murder of a brahmūn There is no sin in a brahmūn's using sugar-cane, unhusked rice, lime in pana, milk, turmeric, masha-kulaya, medicine, salt, or water "

To crown these restrictions, we are presented with a general table of prohibited dishes throughout the month "On the first of the moon he who eats of a pumpkin, becomes indigent On the second, he who eats *brihutee*†, will fail in his attempts to remember *Vishnoo* Eating *putula*‡, on the third, increases one's enemies The eating of radishes on the fourth insures indigence, calumny pursues the man who partakes of the *vīlwa*§ on the fifth, a man becomes a bird in the next transmigration by eating *nīma*|| leaves on the sixth, on the seventh, he who eats the fruit of the *tala*¶ tree, destroys his own body Ignorance follows on eating the cocoa-nut on the eighth He who eats *laoo*** on the ninth is as though he had eaten cow's flesh, but eating *kulmee*†† on the tenth is equal to the murder of a cow It is sinful to eat beans on the eleventh, *poni shaka*‡‡ eaten on the twelfth is equal to the murder of brahmūn To eat brinjals§§ on the thirteenth insures the death of your children He who on the fourteenth eats *masha-kulaya* becomes perpetually diseased, and he who eats flesh on the fifteenth incurs the greatest guilt "

"Clothes washed in a shallow pool, or by a woman, or by a washerman, or hung up to dry with the two ends

* *Solanum Jacquini* † *Phaseolus Catjang* ‡ *Trichosanthes dioica.* § *Ægle Marmelos* || *Melia Azadarachta* ¶ *Borissus flabelliformis* ** *Cucurbita lagenaria.* †† *Convolvulus reptans* ‡‡ *Basella rubra et alba* §§ *Solanum Melongena*

pointing to the south and west, are unholy. He who puts on new apparel on Sunday becomes poor; he who does it on Monday is afflicted with boils; on Tuesday, is subject to much trouble; on Wednesday, will possess the means of purchasing more clothes, on Thursday, will become learned and wealthy, on Friday, will be happy, but he who does it on Saturday, will be involved in trouble and disputes. He who delivers his clothes to the washermen on the 6th or the 21st of the moon, on the 12th or the 27th, on Saturday, Tuesday, or on the day of a shraddha, destroys seven of his ancestral generations. The clothes in which the Hindoo has appeared in public, being unholy, are always changed on his return home. This apparel is washed abroad, but the vesture in which he eats or performs his daily ablutions is either washed by himself, or if sent for convenience to a washerman, is invariably re-washed before it is used. Mending clothes, that first duty of a British housewife, is scarcely known in India. With our ideas of the connection between rags and poverty, we are led involuntarily to pity a Hindoo clothed in ragged apparel, but perhaps we may be disposed to reserve our compassion for his mental poverty, when we hear that a Hindoo wife, however ardent her conjugal affection, would as much scorn to ply the needle in her husband's service, as he himself would disdain clothes which had been thus mended. When a Hindoo therefore appears in rags, we behold in him the victim not of poverty, but of superstition. As there are no paper mills in India, and no rag merchants except the undertakers, the Hindoo lays up the relics of his apparel, sometimes encrusted with the dirt and oil of more than one generation, to constitute in process of time a quilt for winter.

As a Hindoo woman, though she descends to the

kneading of cow dung for fuel, scorns to mend her husband's clothes so a Hindoo never *shaves himself*. This unimportant act comes in for its share of restriction, since among the Hindoos nothing must be left to choice, necessity, or convenience. Let us hear what the great sages of India have enjoined on this subject. "He who shaves on Sunday becomes miserable, he who shaves on Monday, happy, on Tuesday, he hastens his own death, on Wednesday, accumulates wealth, on Thursday, becomes dishonourable, on Friday, childless, and he who shaves on Saturday, brings on his head every misfortune, while he who is shorn at the house of a barber, becomes always unfortunate." The beard is the Hindoo mourning apparel, an Englishman attires himself in black, but the Hindoo encumbers himself with a long beard, which the poor shoodra is to keep for thirty days, as having sprung from the feet of the Hindoo creator.

Success and misfortune are attached as much to the position in which a man sleeps, as to the day on which he is shaved. "He who sleeps looking towards the east, will acquire wealth, if he sleeps towards the south, he will prolong his existence, if to the north, he will be troubled with evil thoughts." To the west a person is never to sleep, and "to sleep with the feet towards the east, is equal to the murder of a brahman."

On the subject of Religious Worship we have the following rules. "In an act of worship circumambulate Doorga once, the Sun seven times, Gunesha thrice, Krishna four times, and Shiva (the genius of destruction) half a time. From the Sun ask freedom from disease, from Vunhee, wealth, knowledge from Muha-deva, and deliverance from Vishnoo." "He who worships a Shiva or a Vishnoo established by a shoodra, cannot obtain forgiveness by ten thousand acts of penance." This rigid

calf-skin” said a great Indian philologist as he visited the College Library “What sacrilege!” Yet so it is, these sacred books which prohibit the murder of the cow, have themselves been wrapped in the skin of many a sacred bull.

“He who performs the morning and evening ceremonies on the day of the full and new moon, or of a *shraddha*, or on the sun’s entering a new sign, or on the twelfth of the moon, is as though he murdered his parents. On the days of the *shraddha*, the following actions are forbidden—to play at dice, to go anywhere, to cross a river, to be familiar with any one, to sleep in the day, to eat twice, or to fight. If a *shoodra* while sitting salute a *brahmun*, and he return it, they will both be eternally punished. He who takes up a *toolusee* leaf on the 12th day of the moon, on the full or the new moon, or in the morning or evening, or at night, cuts off *Vishnoo*’s head. He who presents a single *toolusee* leaf to *Vishnoo* in the month *Kartika*, is as though he presented ten thousand cows. It is improper to salute a paternal uncle if younger than yourself, but your mother-in-law, or elder brother’s or *gooroo*’s wife, if younger, may be saluted. He who sees a *dumdee*, or the residence of a deity, without bowing, must offer an atonement.” Superstition indulges more in fear than in hope. The credulity of the Hindoo commonalty has stretched this precept to its utmost limit, and endowed the Mahomedan saints with the same attributes of fear and reverence as their own gods. A little above Serampore there are landing-stairs dedicated to a Mahomedan saint, and a Mussulman mendicant who lodges there, navigates the river in a little boat with a red flag, begging alms from the devout crews of vessels, a few cowries, or a few grains of rice thrown into his boat, are supposed to secure a propitious voyage. While we were

penning this article, a fishing-boat manned by Hindoos was upset, and as the men passed by in search of their vessel, the boatman was heard to say to the helmsman, "Did I not request you to give a few small fish to the Mussulman mendicant? You rejected my advice, and you see the consequence, we have lost our boat." This credulity is not confined to the ignorant rabble; many respectable Hindoos would shudder to injure a Mahomedan mosque. Nay, to such an extent is this superstitious veneration carried, that we have seen well-dressed natives, as they passed a Christian church, put their joined hands to their forehead, in token of respect — "He who puts a necklace of flowers on his own neck, or a flower in his own hair, or prepares sandal wood to beautify his person, or is shaved at the house of a barber, would become unfortunate, even were he *Indra* himself.

is highly inauspicious ” “ It is unadvisable to touch the clothes, seat, bed, water-pot, wife, or children of another ” “ The earth trembles if it be ploughed on the day of the new moon, or full moon, or on the day of a shraddha, and during five particular days in Assar.” You are not permitted, except under the greatest necessity, to pronounce your own name or that of your *gooroo*, wife, children, or that of a stranger To pass between two brahmuns, or between fire and a brahmun, or between a *gooroo* and his disciple, or between a man and a woman, or to walk before a plough, is equal to the sin of killing a brahmun He who places a lamp in a temple, or suspends one in the air in the month *Kartika*, to his merit there is no end He who rides to a place of sanctity, loses one half his merit, he who carries an umbrella over his head, or uses shoes, loses one quarter of his merit, he who during his journey uses oil or flesh, one eighth, and he who has intercourse with a woman, loses the whole of the merit he would acquire It is forbidden to place one leg astride on the other, or to leap over the remains of food, or to scratch the head with both hands These things are not unclean—a fly, a cat, rain-water, the small drops of spittle emitted when speaking, and the mouth of your own wife and children On touching wood for the funeral pile, or the funeral pile, or a *chundala*, or the sign-post of a shraddha, or a brahmun paid for his religious services, let the man bathe, as well as wash his apparel Past acts of merit are lost by receiving the shadow arising from a light, or from the human body, or from a bedstead, or by touching the parings of nails, the cuttings of hair, or receiving dust thrown by a goat or a cat ”

The following are the Moral maxims contained in this compilation, “ He who injures another man’s wife or pro-

perty, goes to hell. He who bears all things and injures none, and is beloved by all, goes to heaven. He who performs any good action without intending it, loses half its merit. A court of justice is like Kashice (Benares), the judge like Shiva, and the officers of justice like the ten millions of lingas, let there then be no false evidence. When a man enters a court of justice, his ancestors await their doom from his truth or falsehood." The most beautiful maxim in the book, we have reserved to the last. "The earth feels not half so much oppression from all its seas and mountains, as from the injurious and ungrateful."

Our readers have now before them the substance of this vade-mecum of Hindoo domestic economy. How far a perusal of it is calculated to produce a favourable impression on the subject of Hindoo observances, we must leave to their judgment or benevolence. In other countries the superstitious creed which forms the substance of this work, obtains currency only with the ignorant and vulgar, and is the offspring, not of instruction, but of oral tradition. It was reserved for the Hindoo sages to give it a substantial form, and invest it with the sanctions of religion. Thus to interfere with the domestic avocations of life, and to establish an imaginary scale of innocence and guilt for actions in their nature perfectly indifferent, must on every consideration appear strange, least of all should we have expected it from philosophers and legislators. How would it have tarnished the fame of Bacon and Locke, men who occupy the same station in the western as the authors of these axioms do in the eastern world, had they given the stamp of their authority to such childish absurdities. The sages of India seem to have thought that they could never carry legislation too far, and that to leave their

disciples free, even in the most trivial actions, would have been an irreparable injury. And how does a Hindoo appear as he comes forth from their hands? Have they moulded him into any thing that is dignified, manly, and noble, or have they not given us as the highest effort of their creative genius, a poor, crippled, credulous, superstitious being, without freedom either of soul or body? How contemptible in the eyes of the civilized world must the follower of the vedas appear! To ascertain when he may be shaved, or when he may clothe himself with new apparel, he must open his sacred code,—on the return of morning, he must turn to his culinary almanack to learn the order of the day for purchasing or rejecting vegetables,—on retiring to rest, he must again resort to his shastras to learn in what position his legs must be placed; and woe be to him if, in the restlessness of a sultry night, he turn his feet to the west—he consigns his soul to everlasting damnation. How different is man thus fettered, and man as described by the bard of nature. “How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god!”

It has been alleged with something of a triumphant air, that the simple manners of the Hindoos have undergone no alteration for twenty centuries. This has arisen perhaps in a considerable degree from the extraordinary importance which has been attached to actions beneath the dignity of legislation. But what praise is it for any nation to have stood still for two thousand years, without making any progress in civilization and refinement? The great mass of the Hindoo population is at this moment in no better situation with regard to comfort and convenience, than were the English during the period of the Holy Wars. The native hut is far inferior to that of the

Aracanese, who inhabit the borders of Bengal. In their apparel the middling and lower classes reconcile themselves to a degree of filth and dirt, which incalculably augments the inconveniences of this sultry climate. In a country where the free circulation of air is a luxury, every village is enveloped in a forest of trees, even the underwood, which in the east is so detrimental to health, is suffered to taint the atmosphere with the most noxious exhalations. Scarcely a village in Bengal has a road which is passable during the rains. Almost every house has a little pool filled with stagnant water attached to it, that the female branches of the family may obtain water secure from observation. In this land, of which poets have peopled every hill, and valley, and river, with the beings of their fancy, in which philosophers have been busied from time immemorial with the nature of God and the human soul, and how it may obtain liberation from its loathsome tenement without the fear of returning thither, every thing relative to comfort and convenience betokens the very infancy of society. What praise, then, is it that the axioms of the shastras have perpetuated this state of things for so many ages? Could they have given equal perpetuity to a refined system of morals, we might have awarded to them that meed of praise which no system of polytheism has ever yet earned. But while manners have been standing still, morals have been degenerating, and even the foundations of the Hindoo faith have been silently wearing away, and it now leans for support on the unsteady basis of vulgar applause, rather than on the deep-rooted affections of the heart.

It would be some consolation to the mind could we view this collection of precepts simply as ridiculous and indiscreet. But this unhappily is not the case, they are pernicious in the highest degree. In them the hopes and

fears of the eternal world, bandied about like a plaything, lose all their weight. They seem to have been introduced without the least discrimination, to round a period, or to create a kind of poetical diversity of sound. Eternal punishment is awarded to the breach of ceremonial observances, and eternal happiness held forth as a reward for actions which have not the smallest tendency to improve society. Of the idea of a future state scarcely any of the family of man is devoid. The wild savage of America is not without his anticipation of future rest, and in proportion to his knowledge, his ideas are far more dignified and noble than the absurd fictions of the Hindoo. His untutored mind peoples heaven with valiant warriors, whose martial achievements and patriotic fidelity shine forth in the traditionary recollections of the tribe. The Hindoos people heaven with men who have signalized themselves by an uninterrupted attention to ceremonies which only detract from the dignity of our nature. In the code under review the same punishment is denounced for falsehood, and for innocently mistaking the branch with which the teeth are to be cleansed,—adultery is prohibited under no higher sanctions than those which prohibit the sleeping to the west,—the judge of quick and dead is represented as regarding with equal indignation the most dreadful sins against the peace of society, and the indifferent action of returning a salutation while sitting. We are told by the highest Hindoo authority that man is a mere machine, but this code makes him a demon. Is it not tantamount to the annihilation of all morality, to say that all the toils of a virtuous life will be blasted by washing the face looking to the south, that every aspiration after immortal happiness will be blown to the winds by making obeisance while anointing the body with oil? No matter with what assiduity a Hindoo

may have walked in the paths of virtue, no matter with what anxiety he may have laboured to subdue his passions, or to promote the welfare of his fellow-creatures, if in the last hour of his existence, he slumber with his feet to the west,—all his merits will be rendered useless, he will be consigned to one common doom with the assassin and the adulterer, and associated in eternal punishment with the vilest of mankind. Is the Hindoo to believe all this, and believing it, are we to expect from him the smallest attention to the duties of life?

The doctrine of future rewards and punishments imposes so effectual a check on immorality, that any system of religion from which it is excluded, is necessarily hostile to the best interests of society. It is one of those fundamental articles of faith without which human existence would be an idle dream. A false system of religion, in which the glory of the Creator forms no stimulus to exertion, has little else to hold forth as a check on the passions than the terrors of futurity. What shall we say then of these Hindoo legislators, who have laboured, in the passages quoted, to eradicate this salu-

If he believes them, what family is secure from violation? It is for the highest interests of mankind that the final Judgment should be regarded with awe as the court in which all those crimes which have escaped human vigilance, shall be exposed and punished. The omniscience of the Deity, viewed in connection with the terrors of judgment, ceases to be an object of idle speculation, and creates the most salutary restraint on human profligacy. Every step, therefore, taken to invalidate in the human breast the sanctions of eternity, is an act of treason against the peace of mankind. But is it not obvious that to represent the Deity in that investigation, as examining, *not the secrets of all hearts, but whether a benediction* has been granted with the sacrificial flowers in the hand, or whether any of his creatures had slept to the west, is virtually to abrogate the doctrine of future rewards and punishments? What human court would possess any weight or influence, if this were its code of laws, or these the functions of its judges? Setting aside, therefore, eternal happiness, what irreparable injury is this code calculated to produce on the affairs of time? How poor a substitute is the vigilance of weak, short-sighted human magistrates, for the ever-wakeful vigilance of the Almighty. But Divine Providence has not resigned its sceptre to these miserable philosophers, nor permitted them wholly to eradicate the hopes and fears of a future world. The fear of future punishment still haunts the conscience of a Hindoo, though with diminished vigour. The Hindoo still consoles himself with the hope that God will in a future state punish those personal injuries for which he obtained no redress in this world, he cannot bring himself to believe that his Creator will visit with equal doom the destroyer of his domestic peace, and the man who bathes with his face to the west,—from the tri-

